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THE CHURCH
IN THE
WILDERNESS

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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FRAGMENTS

FROM THE

STUDY OF A PASTOR.

BY

GARDINER SPRING,

PASTOR OF THE BRICK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE CITY
OF NEW YORK.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK:

JOHN S. TAYLOR,

THEOLOGICAL AND SUNDAY SCHOOL BOOKSELLER, BRICK
CHURCH CHAPEL.

1838

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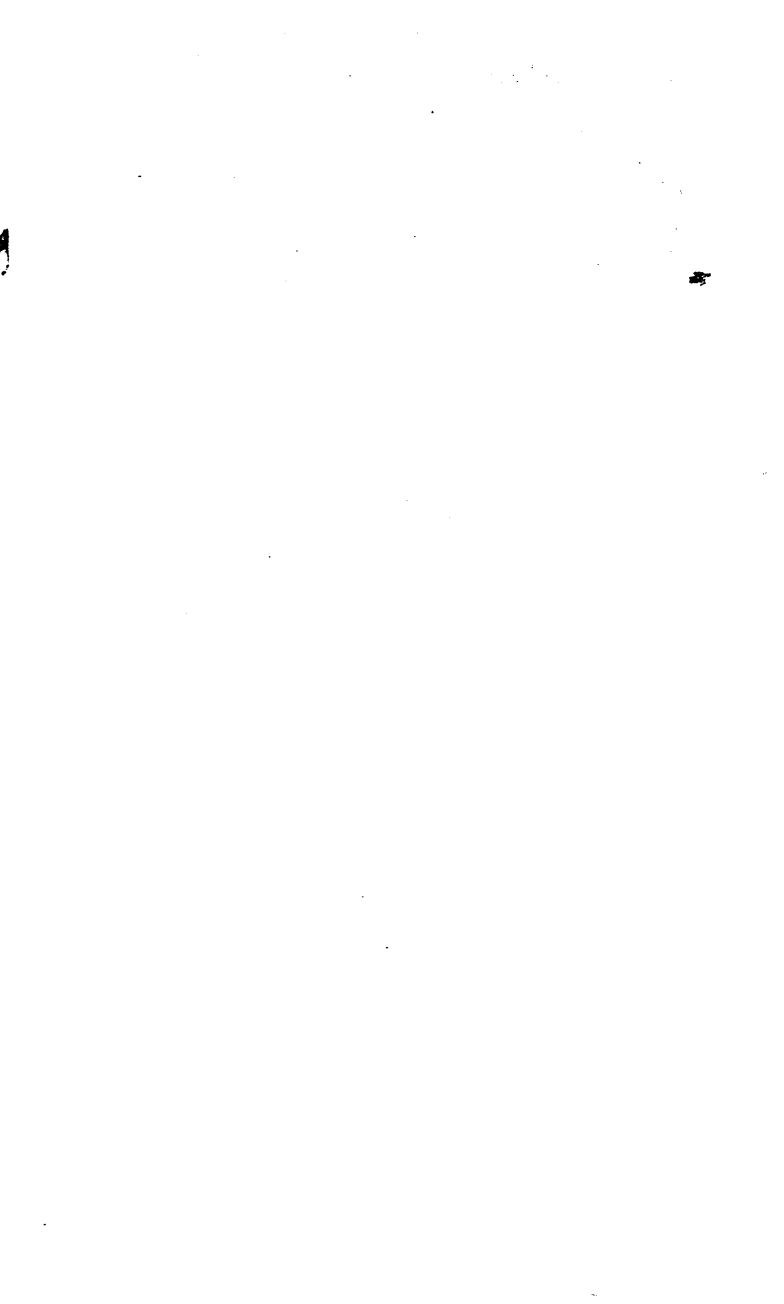
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INTRODUCTION.

EVERY minister of the gospel who indulges himself in the use of his pen beyond his weekly preparations for the pulpit, has probably found no small amount of matter unexpectedly accumulating upon his hands, which, though inappropriate to the services of the Sanctuary, is in his partial judgment too valuable to be thrown away. The writer of this little volume challenges for it nothing more than what it purports to be—"Fragments from the study of a Pastor." They are truly parts broken off from the mass—small detached portions, collected by an occasional employment of those leisure hours, and fragments of time which have remained after the more serious duties of the week have been discharged.

The taste of the age is too obviously unfitted for heavy reading and continuous thought. And yet, it has been the wish of the author that these pages should present *important truth*. And he will feel not a little gratified if the event should justify the conclusion that religious instruction is here conveyed to some minds to which it might otherwise have no access.

Some of the pieces here presented will be recognized by those who belong to the author's pastoral charge. The *first* and *third* were publicly read, several years

ago, at his weekly lecture of a Thursday evening. He was solicited at the time to publish them. They have since been revised, and however imperfect, are, he hopes, better adapted to do good.

The "Inquiring meeting" is *substantially* founded in fact, so far as it regards the instances of religious impression. With some exceptions, of the reality of which the writer has the most satisfactory evidence, they have all fallen under his own immediate observation. With all their incidents, they may be confided in as a true narrative. The letter to a young clergyman was suggested by a correspondence with one of his junior brethren in the ministry, and was subsequently thrown into the form of an *address* to the students of the Theological Seminary at Princeton, at their semi-annual examination in the Spring of the present year.

The whole is submitted to the public eye with hesitation, yet with some hope that it may be useful. If a single child of God should hereby be refreshed and comforted; if any poor Prodigal should be induced to return to his Father's house where there is bread enough and to spare; if any of the lambs of the flock that have been driven away should be restored, or any sick healed; these fragments will not have been gathered up in vain.

New York, July, 1838.

No. I.

THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS.

I was crossing a narrow strip of land which lies upon the frontiers of France and Italy, where the Alps, without losing their loftiness and sublimity, begin to incline toward the Mediterranean, and occasionally put on an appearance of freshness and verdure. I had resolved, if possible, to ascend *Mont Viso*. Though not so high as *Mont Blanc*, yet from its solitary and isolated position, it presents a more imposing appearance of grandeur. It stands almost alone ; and like a colossal pyramid, rises high above the various crests, and peaks, and ridges which surround its base. It presented to my mind the aspect of some huge beacon towering amid the storm ; and the strange irregularity of the scenery gave strength to the impression. It seemed as though the heaving, angry ocean had been here arrested in the extreme fury of its tempest, and as if the power

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which had caused, had suddenly stilled its terrors, and bound it in solid and enduring chains. Inconstancy and change seemed strongly represented in constant and changing forms—the very emblem of mutability fixed as it might seem immutable.

Already had I ascended far up the mountain, and all the beautiful plain of Italy was spread out before me. That immense reservoir of waters, that well-known extent of gardens and cities, of wealth and splendour, which the heroes of ancient and modern times pointed out to their soldiers as the reward of perseverance and victory, glittered upon my eye. At the foot of the mountain, on the one side, had once stood the elephants of Hannibal and the armies of Francis the First; on the other, the forces of Cæsar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon. So vivid was my fancy, it almost seemed that I could hear the sullen tramp of their legions; and the rushing of the streams around me seemed disturbed by the fording of their thronging cavalry, and all the tumult of a hurried march. I looked almost to see the Roman eagle hovering over their steps, of the lillies of France trembling to the mountain air.

The continued and almost unbroken stillness of the scene recalled me from this vision of the past.

All this glory and greatness had departed. Sooner will the first drops which issued from these torrents, come back from the vast ocean in which they are mingled, and flow again from their source, than aught of all this life, and renown return, to trouble or astonish the scene on which they once played so conspicuous and interesting a part. Yet I dwelt long, and with singular pleasure on the names of those illustrious heroes. And who does not as he crosses the Alps?

It was with a feeling of self-reproach that I turned at last to think of others. The glory and splendour of this world had first taken possession of my mind, while true worth and piety had also their monuments near me. I was standing in the retreat of the *ancient Vaudois*.

“—Few remember them. They lived unknown,
“Till persecution dragged them into fame,
“And chased them up to heaven.”

From the eminence from which I surveyed them, four beautiful vallies spread themselves before me something in the form of a *fan*, converging from the distance, and terminating almost in a point near the spot where I stood. I had heard of this asylum of the faithful as the region of barrenness

and ice. I had read of it as a desert environed with frightful precipices and protected by eternal snows. But such was not the scene on which I gazed. A beautiful sky spread its blue arch above. The verdure was springing from the sides of the mountain, scantily it is true, but for that the more welcome. The valley below seemed spread with a carpet of rich emerald, wrought in with the brightest flowers. Nor were the light and life of civilization wanting to complete the picture. Scattered villages and villas were seen at intervals, and every where the vine and the fig tree enriched the plain. The Po and the Dora too, with their almost innumerable branches were wildly urging their waters down the rocks and through the crevices of the mountains, till you might see them quietly stealing to the vallies and mingle with the streams below.

I stood gazing, sometimes at the naked and barren cliffs of some distant promontory ; sometimes at mountains that lifted their snowy summits where the eagle is never seen to soar ; and sometimes at the enchanting plain beneath. *And are these the rocks, said I, which looked down upon those sanguinary persecutions ? Are these the mountains whence vibrated those songs of salvation that indicated to the foe the retreat of the faithful ?*

Are these the streams once stained with the blood of the saints? Are these the vallies from which ascended in many a mingled column the flames of the faggot, the supplications and sighs of the martyrs, and the fiend-like exultation of their destroyers? I felt as though I were surveying the monuments of deeds in which one scarce knows which had the pre-eminence,—the faith and constancy of the victims, or the fury of their fierce persecutors. Here once dwelt a small, poor, forgotten people; a people, weak indeed, but full of that faith which *wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, escaped the edge of the sword.* Here dwelt a people whose glory shone brightest in their tribulations, and to whom it was entrusted to preserve the purity of the faith through centuries of darkness, when barbarous nations ravaged and destroyed all around them, making no distinction between what was sacred and what was profane. And here still dwelt the descendants of that same people, in all the peculiarity of their language, habits and manners, as well as in all the integrity of that faith which has survived the revolution of empires, and which is still destined to travel down the descent of time, and as successive ages roll on,

exert a reforming and purifying influence over the world.

And can this be the place, thought I, where the Woman, described in the Apocalypse, *hath a place prepared of God, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the Serpent?* While this inquiry was passing through my mind, I was lost in contemplation. My thoughts became irregular and wild. My imagination wandered, I knew not whither. Whether it were that sleep overtook me on the mountain, and what followed was the fancy of a dream, or whether a waking vision occupied my senses, I am unable to tell. I seemed raised in spirit above the world; and yet my hopes and fears were strangely connected with its spiritual welfare and prosperity. A subject upon which I had thought, and read, and conversed often, weighed upon my bosom, and filled it with deep and serious reflection. My anxious mind brooded over it, as some busy, restless fancy, waking to the roar of the tempest, pictures to itself evils which nothing can remedy or relieve.

I trembled for the Ark of God. Errors, deeply ruinous in doctrine and practice, were inducing desolation and decay. A smooth theology had taken the place of those wholesome truths which

have in every age been the wisdom of God, and the power of God to salvation. The *meekness of wisdom* was superseded by a vaunting and arrogant spirit ; and means and measures were making progress in the church, which threatened to burn over her fairest borders, and leave them like a land that could not be tilled, or sown, or eared, or harvested for generations to come. I saw collisions of sentiment distracting the minds and dividing the counsels of those who were once *joined together in the same mind and the same judgment*. I saw also chilling alienations among those who once loved as brethren ; while the peaceful spirit who had so long hovered over this fair land, was just about to spread his pinions and fly away. Already, *the ways of Zion mourned because few came to her solemn feasts*. Already the streams of mercy seemed to be drying up, which have for so long a period been refreshing our heritage and bearing on their bosom the blessings of salvation to distant lands. *From the daughter of Zion all her beauty was departed. Her princes were become like harts that find no pasture ; and they were gone without strength before the pursuer*. I thought of her in the days of her captivity and reproach, when she hung her harp upon the willows, and wept. I remembered,

and could not forbear uttering aloud, that affecting lamentation of the Prophet, *How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger.*

Such were the thoughts which occupied me in my reverie. And they were not without close connexion and sympathy with those which had often disturbed me in my hours of waking reflection. The day seemed dark and gloomy like one in November. The sun was enveloped in clouds, and the rough north wind roared around me. I was by the side of a lofty, weather-beaten mountain. Its top seemed to support the heavens, and its brow frowned over a deep, expansive wilderness, impervious to the eye, and immeasurable in extent. It appeared at first view as one vast desert, where was no trace of human footsteps, and where no man dwelt.

As I was walking to and fro with a mind almost as cheerless as the rugged cliffs around me, suddenly a chorus of superhuman voices filled the air. The words of their song fell distinctly upon my ear, clear and sweet as from instruments of silver. They chanted, *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?*

As I turned to look toward the desert, I beheld a female form of distinguished attractions and beauty, leaning on *One like unto the Son of Man*. Her countenance was expressive of intelligence and sweetness. Her mien was humble, yet a peculiar dignity shone in her every action, and her entire appearance seemed pre-eminently fitted to please and captivate. I had heard of *One* dwelling in the wilderness, whom the tongues of inspired men and angels had represented as clothed with celestial comeliness and decked with beauty from the skies—a wanderer in the desert, but not alone; hand in hand with *One* more powerful than herself, she had her course through its strife and temptations. As my eye rested upon her for the purpose of scanning her person more carefully, that I might satisfy myself if this were indeed she of whom I had heard, I saw that she was enveloped in a dense and hazy atmosphere, through which a pale light beamed from her countenance and clothed her form, and seemed every where struggling to dart forth its rays. For the moment it seemed doubtful whether she would not be merged in the obscurity; but the mist was soon dissipated, and she looked forth like *the moon walking in her brightness*, luminous in her entire form,

and, like *the angel standing in the sun*, conspicuous to the world.

I observed that her features were in part covered with a veil. She had an humble, lowly spirit, and though in the full power of youth and beauty, seemed utterly unconscious of her attractions. She had no desire of superiority or distinction; no undue assumption of dignity; no spirit of ambition or rivalry. She did not court applause, nor was she offended at rebuke. She sought not the eye of the world, neither delighted in its bustle and confusion; but rather in the shade and stillness of some beloved retreat, open only to the observation, and consecrated only by the presence of her Lord and Husband. At times she instinctively shrunk from his inspection, and hid her face in confusion. Nor was there in this any affectation of modesty, but a deep and ingenuous impression of her unworthiness that oppressed her, and often indeed found its way to her lips. *Look not upon me*, she would exclaim, *Look not upon me, because the Sun hath looked upon me!* One of her loveliest characteristics, as it seemed to me, was this humble, meek, and retiring spirit. Her progress was often rapid, yet was it noiseless and silent as the dew of heaven. Wherever she took a false step, she herself was the first to detect it,

and prompt and faithful in her self-reproach. Rather than feel that she was worthy to be the object of admiration, many a time would she lay her hand upon her mouth and exclaim, *Behold I am vile !* There was a lowliness of demeanor exemplified in her progress that reminded me of the spirit of genuine piety. She seemed at such a remove from the haughty, overbearing temper of the world, that I concluded she belonged to another race of beings. For nothing did I envy her so much as for this unearthly spirit.

And can this be she, thought I, of whom I have so often read, that was *cast out into the open field to the loathing of her person, in the day that she was born ?* If so, nothing could be more striking than the contrast between her original condition, her debased parentage, and her present elevation and prospects. She was like one who had sustained a moral transformation, and had been, as it were, recreated and born anew. Once *poor and miserable, and blind and naked*, she was now *clothed with embroidered work, girded about with fine linen, covered with silk, and decked with ornaments*. Though *her birth and nativity were of the land of Canaan ;* though *her father was a Hittite and her mother an Amorite ;* yet she was now allied to a family that parti-

cipates the riches and royalty of a nobler world, and *her renown went forth among the nations for her beauty*. She was the child of God—the adopted daughter of the king of heaven. Her second birth traced her lineage to the skies;—*born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*. She had no unborrowed splendor, yet was she *covered with righteousness as with a garment, and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*. Though once soiled and blemished by her native servitude; though abject in her occupation and associates; yet was she now *as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold*. My own impressions of her loveliness were confirmed by what I distinctly heard from the lips of her royal husband. *Behold*, said he, *thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair. My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bare her*. Sometimes he spoke of the tenderness of her attachment; sometimes of her purity and faithfulness; and sometimes breaking forth in the language of gratified joy, he exclaimed, *Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee!*

Filled with admiration, I could not but again exclaim, *Who is this?*—so depraved in her na-

tivity, and yet so exalted in her adoption—so impure in her original, and yet so pure in her transformation—so heaven-born, so acknowledged and endeared to higher worlds, and yet in her own view so worthless? The answer was quickly upon my lips. Who but the *church of the First Born*!—the spiritual Jerusalem from God out of heaven—the *Bride, the Lamb's Wife*! Who but that complex, ornate and lovely Personage, who is a lively emblem, a typical designation of the virtuous of every age and name, here embodied and personified by the daughter of Zion *travelling in the greatness of her strength*.

This amiable and fair being I beheld far from the abodes of men, in the waste, howling desert. *She had no continuing city*. She was away from home, often *afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted*. The place where she sojourned was a place of vicissitude and woe. There were *no sorrows like her sorrows*, and a stranger did not intermeddle with her joy. Here she *stretched forth her hands unto God, and her soul thirsted for him, as a thirsty land* for the grateful and ever welcome rain. Here she met with delays, hindrances, and vexations. The powers of darkness were leagued against her, combining their strength and subtlety to perplex

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and embitter her mind, to retard her progress, and effect her destruction. She was passing through an enemy's land, and had *put on the whole armour of God. Without were fightings, and within were fears.* External foes, and indwelling sins, distracting cares, painful bereavements, and a subtle adversary often filled her with despondency, and spoiled her every earth-born hope.

I observed that she did not always know how to explore her path, and that she sometimes forsook her guide and wandered from the way. Then she was depressed and discouraged, and instead of going cheerfully forward, would stray up and down in the wilderness. And then her courage faltered, her strength languished, and her beauty withered. Many a time, at such seasons, would she sit down and weep with abundant sorrow, and exclaim as though all hope had deserted her, *My heart is overwhelmed within me ! All thy waves and billows are gone over my soul !* The wilderness too was long, and she was often wearied by the length of the way. Sometimes she trembled, and seemed on the point of fainting or falling ; and then again she would press forward, now with a bold, and now with a doubtful step.

Here she wandered amid the gloom and darkness of the desert. Here she had *a place pre-*

pared for her by God. With his own hands, he spread a table for her. The rocks supplied her, and the manna descended. She fed on angel's food, and ate the bread of life. The pillar and the cloud moved before her. The God of Israel himself was with her,—a friend in need, a refuge in times of trouble. In his mercy and care, in his power and faithfulness, she had resources which never failed. She sometimes grieved him, but he never abandoned her. He seemed to have no employment so delightful to his heart, as to care for her. He would watch her every step. He would often throw around her the arms of his protection to save her even from imaginary harm. He would spread his banner of love over her, and support her from step to step in all her course. I heard him say to her, *I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, I have loved thee ; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.* It seemed to me that he would blot out all the nations, that he would crush a thousand worlds, before one hair of her head should fall to the ground.

And yet there were sensible alternations in her spirit and condition. Sometimes she *looked for light, and beheld darkness, and for good, and*

behold trouble and vexation ; and then again, her most chilling fears were turned into hopes, and her deepest sorrows into joy. Sometimes her prospect was gilded by all the varied tints of Spring, and all the rich maturity of Autumn ; while sometimes the snows of Winter swept along her path, and night enshrouded it with gloom. At times, the skies above her were soft and serene ; at times, they were black and heavy, —lowering with tempest, and dark with indignation. Her path now lay through beds of spices, and along the fruits of the valley, which the forest enriched with its softest foliage ; where the murmur of the running streams, and the light breezes cheered and refreshed her, and every odour, charged with fragrance, brought pleasure to her senses ; and again she was constrained, amid the wildness of the precipices and the roar of the tempest, to pass along the *lion's dens and the mountains of the leopards*.

As I was attentively observing her, a beam of light fell on her path, at a moment when the darkness had increased around her, and when despondency seemed almost to overwhelm her soul. All at once her countenance became bright, and though still pensive, she pursued her course with revived strength and freshness. Something

had roused her from her depression and put new courage into her heart. It was *the voice of her Beloved*. A multitude of conflicting emotions seemed for a moment to agitate her bosom. They were emotions of surprise, of joy, and of grief. *Rise up, my love, my fair One*, said he, *and come away ! For lo, the Winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the song of the turtle is heard in our land. Arise, my love, my fair One, and come away !* At this well-known voice, a tear stood in her eye. She *looked on him whom she had pierced and mourned*. I heard her confessions of folly, and promises of faithfulness, and felt that I could make them my own. My soul melted within me, and flowed forth in her every tear. Never shall I forget when she hid herself from his sight, as though fearful of his reproaches, and bewailed her departures from *him whom her soul loved*. Then it was that I heard him say, *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely !* Then it was that he *allured her and spake comfortably unto her, and gave her the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she sang*

there as in the days of her youth. There did he wipe away the tears from her cheeks, and cheer her with the promise of his favour ; while she, animated and buoyant with warm affection and eager hopes, was once more *like a roe, or young hart upon the mountains of Bether.* For the moment, she forgot that she was in the wilderness. She remembered not that she was far from her destined home, so much did the presence of him she thus loved smooth her path along the desert, and render her sojourn amid its wilds a season of happiness and security.

This endured not long. Dark clouds again enfolded her, the scene put off its charms, and the way before her was curtained with its wonted gloom. There was nothing here to allure her stay, nothing suited to her large desires, nothing that could become the source of her blessedness, or the place of her repose. Nor was she either alarmed or surprised by the oft repeated admonition, *Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted ;* for as often did she herself respond, *O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest !* To her hallowed mind, the place of her pilgrimage presented nothing but a wilderness, which she longed to leave behind her. Communion with

her Lord had rendered it at times a place of delightful remembrance ; but she well knew that a higher abode was awaiting her, where she should enjoy his presence uninterruptedly and forever. There was her treasure, and there her heart. Her conversation was there. Her ardent desires, her highest good was there. Heaven absorbed her attention, awakened her highest affections and passions, and exhausted the vigour of her mind. Her very sorrows and griefs indicated its aspirations and tendencies. Like the magnetic needle, amid all the variations of a transient conflict or passing storm, her heart exhibited a trembling agitation till it reposed in one unchanging point of rest. There were moments when her faith, with more than ordinary vividness, realised the unseen world, when a hope full of immortality shed its fragrance over her spirits, and made her long for the promised land. And then, habitually watchful of the pillar and the cloud, regardless of obstacles and fearless of danger, onward she went from conquering to conquer. The circuities and vicissitudes of her path might at times bewilder her ; the grandeur of the scenery, or its softness and beauty might for a moment allure her ; but her aim was fixed,—the object single to which she aspired. *Forgetting the things that*

were behind, and reaching forth to those which were before she pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ. It was the way to the Heavenly City, and she could not turn back. It was the only way, and she could not forgo the expectation of that imperishable inheritance.

I stood awhile wondering at her zeal and steadfastness, but my wonder ceased when I recollected that she was not alone. She leaned on One who seemed more than mortal.

“ In his side he bore,

“ And in his hands and feet the cruel scars.”

He it was who *bore her griefs, carried her sorrows*, and even made her sins his own. It was her Lord—her Husband—her Life—her Sacrifice. It was *he who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore*, to succour and bless his church when all the nations die. I saw the secret of her strength. *Her life was hid with Christ in God.* Though she was perfect weakness, she had omnipotence to lean upon. Experience had taught her her own insufficiency, and *she lived by faith in him who loved her, and gave himself for her.* I was not a little interested in this view of her progress. Literally did she come *up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved.* She did not move

a step without him. She did not wait for him to lead her, but went forward *leaning upon him*. When she stood still, she always stood alone. Once I saw her so depressed and weary, that she sunk to the earth ; and then he took her up in his arms and carried her like a lamb in his bosom. Thus she pursued her way—for the most part wakeful, active, persevering, and yet ever *leaning upon him*. The influence under which she acted, seemed a sort of charm upon her will, and *drew her with the cords of love as with the bands of a man*. It was her joy, as well as her strength. It gave buoyancy to her hopes, and inspired her with the confidence that he would keep her from falling and bear her safely through. When by some strong temptation, she lost sight of her dependance, most bitterly was she made to repent of her self-confidence and folly. Then it was that her time was spent in retracing and recovering the ground she had lost, and bemoaning her sad condition. Many a time has she then exclaimed, *O that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon my head!* But these seasons of self-reproach and pensiveness were comparatively few. Habitually she looked beyond all created things, felt herself to be his creature and child, subject to his guidance and

control, dependant on his strength and grace. Never did she delight in her dependance more, than during the seasons of her greatest vigor, her most rapid progress. Never could she say with a more comforted confidence, than in her most successful victories, *My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him!*

I thought I saw the heavenly axiom verified, *I love them that love me.* By nothing was her guide and patron more distinguished than his love for her, and by nothing was she more distinguished than her love to him. In strains sweet as angels use, I often heard her sing, *My beloved is the chief among ten thousand! Yea, he is altogether lovely!* On him she placed her fondest affection, and reposed her every hope. Her love was confiding and unsuspecting; her confidence filial and even child-like. Sometimes you might see her reclining under the shadow of his favour with great delight; sometimes lamenting his absence and watching for his return; sometimes traversing with him the loftiest mountains, and sometimes exploring the vineyards *to see if the vine flourish and the tender grape appear.* If difficulties opposed, or dangers threatened, or enemies stood ready to devour; *his grace was sufficient for her, his strength was made perfect in*

her weakness, his presence was her chief joy. Leaning on him, she escaped the dangers of the wilderness, ascended the steepest mountains, stood safe on the brink of the angry precipice, penetrated hideous forests, resisted and overcame the fiercest beasts of prey. With her eye on him and all her trust in him, she continued her course. And while *the youth became faint and were weary, and the young men had utterly fallen*, she renewed *her strength*; in heavenly contemplation, she mounted up with wings as an eagle, and through all her course of duty and of trial, she *ran and was not weary, and walked and did not faint*. While others were intimidated by dangers, or discouraged by difficulty, or lost sight of their Leader; she pressed forward, because her courage was inspirited from above, and her exertion had a spring, a source, an energy not her own. The dangers and trials of the wilderness were gradually left behind her, and remembered only to enhance her gratitude and perpetuate her praise.

.I observed, that in leaning upon her Beloved, she was often *led in a way that she knew not, and in paths that she had not known*. She seemed to be under a sort of discipline, designed to subdue her will to an unconditional acquiescence in his; to chastise her self-confidence, and teach her to

walk *by faith and not by sight*. Like the Father of the faithful, she *went forth not knowing whither she went*. She knew not whither she was going the next hour, the next moment, the next step. It was her province to follow, not to lead; to obey, not to dictate. Her hopes and fears were both subject to disappointment. She was journeying in a weary land, and beheld the way stretching out almost immeasurably before her and lengthening as she proceeded. Often was she conducted by a very diversified course—some times amid scenes of mercy, and sometimes amid scenes of judgment—now amid well watered meadows, and now over dry and barren lands—now to mountains whence she caught a glimpse of her promised inheritance, and now to some low valley where the light of heaven scarcely penetrated. Her path was chequered and variable, like the path of human life. It was perpetually changing—rousing her attention when she was careless—reminding her of her obligations when she was ungrateful—recalling her confidence when she had placed it upon creatures. Her disposition was thus tried, and her character formed. Many a time what she thought her best seasons, proved her worst; and what she thought her worst, proved her best; till, by an alternately painful and

joyful experience, she learned to repose all her confidence in her Redeemer, and to have no will but his. I had not seen such a spirit among men. The storms of life had driven her to this wilderness; there to live eminently above the world and walk with God. There was a tenderness, a meekness, and submission, a love, a gratitude, a cheerfulness which evinced that she was not long to be an inhabitant of earth.

I could not help exclaiming, *What a glorious object is this which I behold.* The church of the First Born struggling through this world,—this moral wilderness,—is *a spectacle to God, to angels and men.* This humble and lovely Personage, thought I, may well be the object of concern, of solicitude, of admiration. While this reflection was passing in my mind; a multitude of voices, issuing I knew not whence, repeated the song, *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?* I turned to ascertain who they were that spoke, and it seemed to me that the atmosphere around and above her was filled with living beings. They were of various descriptions and orders, very dissimilar in their appearance, but all deeply interested in the progress and condition of this daughter of Zion. There was a peculiarity about her person, her professions,

her claims, her prospects, that attracted the attention of the inhabitants of this lower world. She disclaimed the authority of its maxims and usages. She declined its pleasures, and all participation in its unhallowed amusements. And she would not needlessly, even intermingle with its society. She *came out and was separate*, that all might know what immunities she challenged, and of what inheritance she was the expectant.

She was like a *city set on an hill*. None could help seeing her ; none could view her with indifference. Good men beheld her, as identified with the glory of the Redeemer, as identifying their own happiness and glory with hers, as embodying the best interests of mankind in this world and that which is to come. Though now depressed they saw that soon she was to be triumphant, soon to behold *her sons coming from far, and her daughters from the end of the world* ; and though still bearing the marks of imperfection and servitude, e'er long to share the kingdoms of this world with her Prince, and wear a diadem of gold.

Bad men beheld her, sometimes to wonder at the peculiarity of her condition—a feeble woman coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved ! Sometimes to admire her beauty, for she was *comely as Jerusalem, and the fairest among*

women ; sometimes to acknowledge her influence and power, for she was *terrible as an army with banners* ; sometimes to feel the reproach of her example, for though shining in borrowed splendor yet was she the light of the world ; sometimes to be envious at her allotment, for the smile of heaven played upon her countenance, and *the solitary place was glad for her* : And sometimes to hate her with perfect hatred, to vex and injure her, to persecute, and if possible destroy her.

I saw also a multitude of living spirits hovering over her path and near her person. They were messengers from a higher world—an exalted order of beings, and seemed to have come from the presence of God. Their countenances were like lightning, and their raiment white as snow. They possessed wonderful power and activity, and moved with the swiftness of the wind. They were beautiful also beyond a parallel—clothed with unfading and immortal youth, and glowing with the energy and ardour of truth and love. I saw them lifting up their hands—spreading forth their wings—and apparently in sweet discourse with one another as they watched her progress. Now, they would stoop down and bend their faces towards the ground to observe her. Again, they would fly through the air and return, as though

from some unknown region, whither they had gone to tell of her conquests. At times, they would range themselves in throngs and companies, and strike their lyres and tune their hymns of praise. One particularly, I observed, of elevated mein and resplendent countenance, who hovered around her head, so near indeed that the vivid light that enveloped her, coloured and tinged his form, covering both as with a mantle of celestial splendour. With his finger he pointed towards Heaven and said, *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love him !*

I saw too dark and benighted spirits, irritated with malignity, corroded with envy, and scarred by God's indignation, come up as it were out of the earth and a light about her. I trembled for her safety, for it seemed to me they *came with great wrath, as though they knew they had but a short time*. I was re-assured however by the calm and confident mein with which she looked around, as though certain of protection from One mightier than they. And then I heard the clashing of arms, and saw the rushing of battle. In the tumultuous conflict which ensued, I could distinguish voices of fiend-like rage and despair, the

answer of exulting, indignant courage mingled together, and at times the startling cry of some wounded, fallen combatant, resounding faint and fainter, as though borne and hurried down to earth's very centre. With what deep interest did I await the result ! Yet I did not fear for it. Soon the noise of strife gave place to shouts of victory. And from the sweet notes of praise—praise *to him who is seated upon the throne*,—I knew they were from the victorious company who are *ministering spirits to them that shall be heirs of salvation*, and to whom the church was the object of unremitting care.

I saw also, that God her mighty Maker regarded her. More than all things else, did she illustrate his ineffable glory. He beheld her clothed with his own loveliness. *He rejoiced over her with joy ; he joyed over her with singing. As a bride-groom rejoiceth over his bride, so did her God rejoice over her.* God her Redeemer was with her—her *shelter and shade, her glory and the lifter up of her head.* God her Sanctifier too had his dwelling within her heart, and made her his Temple ; while the ever blessed and glorious Trinity, through her, made impressive and augmenting discoveries of his own excellence.

Next to her glorious Lord, no object so well deserved, or might so well attract attention, as this pilgrim in the desert. I looked upon her with more than admiration. And while I gazed on her, as in her beauty and her might she pursued her course, I could not help repeating the vow I had made in my youth,—*If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning!—let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy!*

Inexpressibly happy, thought I, is the Church of God! Where is there in the world so amiable and lovely a character—where a community so favoured as this! Many a time, when she has had no resting place, and has been hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, has the Shepherd and Stone of Israel provided safety and repose for her, and kept her as the apple of his eye. Often when she has been driven from among men, and perdition like a flood has chased her, has he himself been her dwelling place, and nourished and brought her up as an only child. Her ignorance he has instructed; her languor and depression he has changed into hope and rejoicing; her solitude he has sweetened by his presence; her danger he has driven far away. He has been *her refuge and her strength*. To the multiplied mischiefs

that have passed through the earth, he has said, *Touch not mine anointed and do my people no harm!* He has beautified and enlarged her. He has caused her to look forth like the morning. He has *made her head like Carmel, and the hair of her head like Lebanon.* He has *set her as a seal upon his heart, as a seal upon his arm.* Nor will his purposes of love toward her be accomplished till he has purified her from all her imperfection, decked her with majesty and excellency, and in the day of her celestial espousals, *presented her to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.*

While this train of thought was passing through my mind, I cast my eyes once more towards the wilderness. No longer was it a desert, but rather an expanse of cultivated fields, and gardens of richest shrubbery, every where interspersed with beautiful villages, towering palaces, lofty turrets, and living men. The corn, and the vine, the olive and the palm flourished. *Instead of the thorn, was the fir tree,* and instead of the briar, the myrtle and the rose. *Waters broke out in the desert.* The way through this verdant territory seemed a high way. No tedious, intricate pilgrimage was it now. Enemies had disappeared. *No lion was there, neither any ravenous beast*

went up thereon, it was not found there. And the pilgrim had now thrown aside that veil which obscured her, and put on her most splendid attire. A voice reached her from the heavens, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* She looked forth now as the effulgence of the world. She seemed as it were, *clothed with the Sun ; the moon was under her feet, and upon her head was a crown of twelve stars.* There was a halo of glory encircling her, that reminded me of the *Shekinah* that stood over the ancient tabernacle. She was near to the Deity, encompassed with glory, and living within the comprehension of his smile. Kings and Princes were allured by her brightness, and the wondering people came bending to her. *The Kings of Tarshish and the isles brought her presents ; the kings of Sheba and Seba offered her gifts.* No longer did she falter in her course, or turn her eye backward. She was clothed with a divine panoply, and went forth *more than conqueror through him that loved her.* A banner waved over her of the purest gold, on one side of which was set in rich enamel, THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS ; and on the other, LET EVERY ONE THAT NAMETH THE NAME OF CHRIST DEPART FROM INIQUITY. At her ap-

proach, every false system of religion was arrested in its progress ; all mist and darkness, error and delusion, sin, shame and woe fled before her. Streams of light and salvation flowed every where around her, and sent forth their blessings to every land. In her hand she carried a scroll, or parchment, which she unfolded before the nations, and by which she *turned them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Wonderful was the transformation that attended and followed her brilliant career. Iniquity fell before her. Tyranny and oppression and unrighteousness were blasted by her breath. Misery and despair were together chased away by the light of her countenance. *Every valley was exalted, and every mountain and hill was made low ; the crooked was made straight, and the rough places plain ; and the glory of the Lord was revealed, and all flesh saw it together.*

“ O scenes surpassing fable and yet true ;

“ Scenes of accomplished bliss, which who can see

“ Though but in distant prospect, and not feel

“ His soul refresh'd with foretastes of the joy !”

The mountains and the hills broke forth before into singing, and all the trees of the field clapped their hands. The spirit was poured from on

high, and the world appeared to be turning to the service and favour of the true God. Every revolution of this diurnal sphere beheld her triumphs *from the rising of the Sun to his going down.*

“Distant, barbarous climes,
“Rivers unknown to song, where first the sun
“Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
“Flames on the Atlantic isles,

alternately became the scenes of her perpetuated victories. Distant continents and islands, wandering tribes and collected empires, though once shrouded in deepest gloom, now beheld and reflected the brightness of her rising.

“One song employs all nations, and all cry
“*Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us !*
“The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
“Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
“From distant mountain catch the flying joy.
“Till nation after nation taught the strain,
“Earth rolls the rapt’rous hosannah round.”

My reverie continued, but the gloom and depression which at first pervaded it passed away. Instead of a dark day in November, it appeared to my gratified imagination like the loveliest in May. Brown Autumn had fled. Winter had been chased away by the softness and beauty of Spring.

The sun was just descending in his gayest chariot, and throwing his light from pole to pole. The rough north wind had yielded to the fragrant zephyr. The rugged mountain had become like the verdant lawn. The unclouded sky, the balmy air, the rich foliage of the forest, the fragrant flowers were but faintly emblematical of the unbroken serenity I felt within. The birds were chanting their songs of joy, and all nature was vocal with praise and blossoming with hope. The bow of promise threw its arch over the eastern sky, and as the sun went down, he cast forth the signals of a still brighter day.

NEW YORK, January, 1838.

No. 11.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW YEAR.

CAN it be that another year has fled? With all its joys and trials, all its sins and duties, all its instructions and privileges,—is it fled? Yes it is gone. It has terminated the lives of millions, and like an irresistible current, has borne them on to the grave and the judgment. It has gone. Like a dream of the night, it has gone!

Amid the rapids of time, there are few objects a man observes with less care and distinctness than himself. To one standing on the shore, the current appears to pass by with inconceivable swiftness; but to one who is himself gliding down the stream, the face of this vast extent of waters is unruffled, and all around him is a dead calm. It is only by looking toward the shore, by discerning here and there a distant landmark, by casting his eye back upon the scenery that is retiring from his view, that he sees he is going forward. And how

fast ! The tall pine that stands alone on the mountain's brow, casts its shade far down the valley ; while the huge promontory throws its shadow almost immeasurably on the plain below. It is but a few years, and I was greeting life's opening day. But yesterday, I thought myself approaching its meridian. To-day I look for those meridian splendours, and they are either wholly vanished, or just descending behind the evening cloud. I cannot expect to weather out the storms of this tempestuous clime much longer. A few more billows on these dangerous seas, perhaps a few days of fair weather is the most I can look for, before I am either shipwrecked, or reach my desired haven.

Why fly these years so rapidly ? It is in anticipation rather than retrospect, that men put too high an estimate upon earthly things. I have been wandering to day in the grave yard. I have trodden softly on the place of my fathers' sepulchres. I have been playing with the willow and the cypress that weep over their dust. The generations of men *dwell here*. Yes, here they are. Those whom I have loved, and still love, and hope to love, are here. *The fashion of this world passeth away*. The fair fabric of earthly good is built upon the sand. It rocks and falls

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under the first stroke of the tempest. *Man, at his best estate is altogether vanity.* It is well that it is so. Were it otherwise, we should put far off the evil day, and live as if we flattered ourselves with immortality on the earth. When the Duke of Venice shewed Charles the Fifth the treasury of St. Mark, and the glory of his princely palace, instead of admiring them, he remarked, "These are the things that make men so loth to die."

On what rapid wings has this last year sped its course? How sure and certain an approximation to the close of this earthly existence! Every year adds to what is past and leaves less to come.

What is your life? It is even as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. What is it, when compared with the amount of labour to be accomplished, and the magnitude of the interests at stake? What is it, compared with the facility with which it may be interrupted, and the ten thousand causes of decay and dissolution it is destined to encounter? What is it, compared with the ever enduring existence to which it is an introduction? How fugitive! how frail! Hardly has the weary traveller laid himself down to rest, when he is summoned away to pursue his journey, or called to his everlasting home. *We spend our years as a*

tale that is told. The flying cloud, the evanescent vapour, the arrow just propelled from the string, the withering grass, the flower whose beauty scarcely blooms e'er it is faded, and whose fragrance is scarcely perceptible e'er it is gone, are apt similitudes of the life of man.

I am but a wanderer, a pilgrim, a sojourner on the earth. Though every thing is cheerful about me, I feel to day exiled from earth and alone. A thousand recollections crowd upon my mind to remind me of the past, to premonish me of the future, and to lead me to some just conceptions of the present. This world is not my home. I have made it my resting place too long. I hear a voice to-day, in accents sweet as angels use, whispering to my lonely heart, *Arise and depart hence, for this is not your rest!* I am away from my Father's house. I have felt vexations and trials. I have experienced disappointments and losses. I have known the alienation of earthly friends. I am not a stranger to dejected hopes. I know something of conflicts within. But now and then I have a glimpse of the distant and promised inheritance, which more than compensates me for all. It is no grief of heart to me that I have no enduring portion beneath the sun. I am but a passing traveller here. I would fain feel like one

who is passing from place to place, and going from object to object, with his eye fixed on some long-wished for abode beyond ; while every successive scene brings me nearer to the end of my course, and all these earthly vicissitudes endear to me the hopes of that final rest. To live here, however happily, however usefully, however well, must not be my ultimate object. I was born for eternity. Nay, I am the tenant of eternity even now. Time belongs to eternity. It is a sort of *isthmus*, or rather a little *gulph*, with given demarcations, set off and bounded by lines of ignorance ; but it mingles with the boundless flood—it belongs to eternity still. A great change indeed awaits us. We must drop this tabernacle and go into a world of spirits. But we shall be in the same duration. I must live for eternity.

In entering on another year, I know not from what unexpected quarter, or at what an unguarded hour, difficulties and dangers may come. O that I could enjoy more of the favour of God, more of the presence of the Saviour, more of the sealing of the ever blessed Spirit ! O for more of a calm, approving conscience, and more of the delightful influence of the peace-speaking blood of Jesus Christ ! From some cause, or other, I begin this year with a trembling heart. I fear I may loose

my way. I am afraid lest I should turn aside from the straight path ; lest I may repose in the bower of indolence and ease ; lest I may sleep on enchanted ground ; lest I should be ensnared, if not destroyed by an unhallowed curiosity ; lest I should be betrayed by my own presumption and self-confidence. I can remember some who have forsaken the way and fallen into snares ; and the sad memorials of their folly are strewn along my path. Why should I hope to pass unwatched or unmolested ? The enemy is not asleep. Many a time have I been baffled by his artifices. Rest where I will, and rise when I may, he is always at my side. And shall I dream of peace ? Shall I not watch and pray ? Will not presumption and sloth cost me dear ! Blessed God ! hold thou me up, and I shall be safe ! Pity thy erring creature. Forgive thy wandering child. Keep, and with the bounties of thy grace, bless thy poor suppliant. Preserve him another year. Let him not be conformed to this world. Give him a warm and humble heart. Let nothing interrupt, or retard his progress toward the Zion above !

I would live another year, if it be my Heavenly Father's will. And yet I would not live to sin, and fall, and reproach my Saviour and his blessed cause. Better die than live to no good purpose !

I would live till my work is done—cheerful when it is most arduous, and grateful for strength according to my day. But I would not be afraid to die. Shall the child desire to be away from his Father's house? Shall the traveller, already weary, choose to have his stay in the wilderness prolonged? It were a sad sight to see a Christian die with regret—to see him go home, as if he were going to a prison! O let me think much and often of my heavenly home!

“Jerusalem, my happy home!

“Name ever dear to me!

“When shall my labours have an end,

“In joy and peace in thee?

“Jerusalem, my happy home!

“My soul stills pants for thee;

“Then shall my labours have an end,

“When I thy joys shall see.”

Let me then often climb the mount of contemplation, and prayer, and praise, and there try to catch a glimpse of *the glory to be revealed*, and get my cold heart affected with a view of its yet distant endearments. Love to God—communion with God—devotedness to God, these are the foretastes of heaven. If through the cares and duties of secular life, I cannot preserve an invariable tendency of mind toward that holy world,—let it be a more

habitual and frequent tendency ! I feel the sorrows of this guilty insensibility, this languor of spiritual affection, and long for those hallowed moments when the meltings of contrition, the fervours of desire, the vividness of faith, and the hope full of immortality shall shed their sacred fragrance over my spirit, and make me pant for heaven. Nor let it be a transient emotion, kindled by some momentary excitement, or awakened by some impulse of the imagination ; but marked by all the ardour of passion and all the constancy of principle. Spirit of the Redeemer ! shed abroad thine own love in this poor heart of mine, and thus seal it to the day of eternal redemption. Let me greet every truth, every providence, every meditation that shall invite me to more intimate intercourse with heaven. Let me dwell upon the communications sent down from that blessed world to cheer my fainting spirit and revive my courage by the way. Let me welcome those messages of divine providence that are designed and adapted to intercept my constant view of earth, and bring the realities of eternity near. Let me grieve at nothing that makes me familiar with heaven. Let me never mourn when some little stream of comfort and joy is dried up, and I am driven more directly to the Fountain. Let me

take a fresh departure for the land of promise from the beginning of this New Year. I would fain look upward with a more stedfast eye, and march onward with a firmer step. Nor would I lose sight of *the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night*, but go where it goes, and rest where it rests.

And who,—*who* will remain behind? Who will be content to have his hopes bounded by the narrow scenes of earth? Go up fellow traveller to eternity, go up to some selected eminence of thought, where the splendours of the Holy City shall break upon your view. This world is not *your* home any more than *mine*. It cannot comfort *you*, more than it has comforted *me*. You may be called away from all its scenes as soon as I. *Your* journey to the grave may be shorter even than *mine*. Nay, *this year*, thou mayest die.

No. III.

THE INQUIRING MEETING.

"Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
"Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

DURING one of those seasons of religious attention with which the churches of New England have been visited by the Holy Spirit, I employed a few weeks in the interior of the country. It was the month of August. The early harvest still waved in rich and brown luxuriance over hill and vale, and formed a delightful and welcome contrast to the heated walls, burning pavement, and arid atmosphere of a crowded city. Mountain and river, the vivid verdure and refreshing breezes of a rural sky, the dense dark forest, with emphasis and sweetest harmony seemed to say, *Marvellous are thy works, Lord, God, Almighty, in wisdom hast thou made them all!*

There was every thing in the scenery that invited to heavenly contemplation. Why, thought I, are not the dwellers in these tranquil and inviting regions all the devoted children of God? What is there here to allure the soul to fellowship with

earth? I know indeed that human nature is the same every where, and that the same general virtues and vices are to be found in both city and country. But the febrile excitement, the stimulated intercourse, the wealth, luxury and dissipation, the pomps and vanities of the world, the refinements of philosophy, and the gross vices which exert so powerful and melancholy an influence in populous cities, seemed here to have no power. The rural christian is placed in circumstances most favourable to his best moral habits and feelings. His trains and associations of devoted thought seem to spring up and flow spontaneously, like the stream that flows from a fountain of living water. Love to God—communion with God—devotedness to God seem almost natural to such exemption from care, to the solitude of such retirement, to such persuasives to hallowed meditation. I was irresistibly reminded of those beautiful lines of Cowper,—

“Far from the world, O God, I flee,

“From strife and tumult far;

“From scenes where Satan wages still

“His most successful war.

“The calm retreat, the silent shade,

“With prayer and praise agree;

“And seem by thy sweet bounty made,

“For those that follow thee.”

It was towards the close of the week, and just as the lengthened shadows reminded us that the sun was going down, that we drew near a quiet and lovely village in the county of Berkshire, not far from the luxuriant meadows beautified by the Housatonic river. Every thing was still, except here and there a hurried effort in the field to prepare for the approaching Lord's day. We alighted at the village Hotel just as the Sun went down. There was a tranquillity—an air of seriousness about the place to which we had not been accustomed even in the best conducted Inns of New England, which led us to congratulate one another in the anticipation of a pleasant Sabbath. And what added not a little to our anticipations, we learned in the course of the evening that our Host was a pious man, and that there was a Revival of Religion in the village of several months standing.

Our expectations in relation to the approaching day were not disappointed. It was the week of the most powerful influence of the Divine Spirit upon the people, and of this week the Sabbath was the crown. I shall never forget the tenderness and solemnity of this day. The unbroken silence of the morning—the quietness and decency of the Inn—the respectful deportment of the servants—the delightful season of family worship,

interrupted by no blowing of horns, or arrival and departure of stages—the tears which trickled down the withered cheeks of an elderly lady, more venerable for her piety even than for her years, as we sung, *Welcome sweet day of rest*—all led us to respond to the sentiments we had just been reading, *Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not* ; As the first bell was ringing for church, I saw the villagers crossing the plain from every direction, and going into the school house. It was a meeting for *prayer*. It had caught the eye of Mrs. S. before it had caught my own, and she was just descending from her chamber with her bonnet on her arm, to say, *Let us not miss the prayer meeting*. We hastened across the green and took our seats in a remote corner of the building. It was truly the hour of prayer. Confession, thanksgiving, entreaty—so humble, and yet so confiding—so confiding, and yet so unpresumptuous—so importunate and yet so submissive, distinguished their addresses to the throne, that we could not but feel that it was given them to have power with God. At ten o'clock, the meeting quietly dispersed, and we repaired to the church. We were strangers, and yet no eye seemed to wander but our own. And ours not long. The prayers, the praises the appearance of

assembly, the awful stillness, the deep thoughts and suppressed emotion of the worshippers, told us that it was none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. I was acquainted with the Pastor, and assisted him in the services of a part of the day. He was one of the staid sons of the Pilgrims—with more sense than sound—and yet knew well how to employ the

“Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.”

His theme was, *how can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* He spake not in the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. He rose with the sacredness and grandeur of his subject, till it seemed as though he was handling the consciences of his auditory with his fingers. I had always respected and loved him, but never so much as now. It was not the declamation of enthusiasm, but the power of truth. It was logical and yet mingled with ardent and impassioned emotion. When he came to speak of the sinner’s perdition, he wept. And who did not weep? How worthless and insignificant, thought I, are all other interests and claims, when compared with the interests, of immortal truth, and the claims of eternity! Such was my old friend the village Pastor. His faithful

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reproof—his affectionate spirit—his meekness of wisdom—his gentleness and simplicity—his holy zeal and unostentatious love—his devotedness to the cause of truth and the honour of God—these, thought I, are characteristics in the ambassador of Christ which

“Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way,”

The subject of the afternoon discourse was, *And when he beheld the city, he wept over it.* Nor could I refrain from saying, with the disciples on the mount, *Lord, it is good to be here.*

At the close both of the morning and afternoon service, notice was given of a *meeting for Prayer* in the School House, and a *meeting for Religious Inquiry* in the Academy, both to be attended in the evening. After church, we accompanied the Pastor and took tea with his family. No sooner were we seated in the parlour, than it was obvious that deep solicitude was felt for the results of this Sabbath, and strong confidence expressed that the gracious Lord had appeared in his glory. Two of the dear children of the family and a female servant had returned from the Sanctuary in deep distress, and with their heads bowed down like a bulrush. The daughter could not suppress her emotions, and exclaimed, *O father! how shall I*

escape ? We were all affected, and for several moments, none of us could speak. The mother looked towards me, and I took my seat by the side of her weeping child. After some conversation, the father proposed a little family prayer-meeting, during which, after singing the fifty first Psalm, two prayers were offered with a special view of supplicating the divine presence with the exercises of the approaching evening. While seated at the tea table, I inquired of my friend, "Whether there was any thing peculiar in the Inquiring Meeting, or any peculiarity in his manner of conducting it?"—"No," said he, "none at all. The object of the meeting is to give those persons in the congregation, who feel an interest in the subject of religion, and who desire it, the opportunity of conversing with their pastor. But" added he, "you will attend and assist me in the exercises."

While Mrs. H. and Mrs. S. went to the prayer-meeting in the School House, Mr. H. and myself and the children went to the Inquiring meeting in the academy. It was a large hall, and was nearly filled. I should judge there were from one hundred and thirty to one hundred and fifty persons present,—chiefly of those who were from sixteen to thirty years of age, together with a

few in more advanced years, and a few who were children. All were seated—some with their heads leaning upon the railing of the seats—some in a fixedness of look that seemed to say, God and eternity are near—some with a settled gloom and depression of countenance—some few with marks of indescribable anguish—and some with a serenity and smile, placid and beautiful as the loveliest sky after a storm. I know not what brought the thought to my mind, but I was instinctively led to dwell a moment, in my reflections, upon that beautiful representation in the Apocalypse. *And there was a rain bow round about the throne.* I felt that God was holy. I could not look upon the splendour of his unveiled glory. But its blazing splendors were all subdued and softened here, like the blended colouring of the rain bow. It seemed to me that I was within the most Holy Place ; where I had new views of the God that is invisible, and where amid all that was solemn and fearful, this well known emblem of his covenant of peace reflected a beauty and splendor so soft and gentle, that even the most guilty and vile might look upon him and live. This, thought I, is that rain of heaven, and these those dews which descend so plentifully upon the mountains of Zion, that the bow of promise completely encircles the

throne. The meeting was opened by singing the following hymn :

- “ Come sacred Spirit from above,
“ And fill the coldest heart with love ;
“ Soften to flesh the flinty stone,
“ And let thy god-like power be known.
- “ Speak, Thou, and from the haughtiest eyes,
“ Shall floods of pious sorrow rise ;
“ While all their glowing souls are born,
“ To seek that grace which they now scorn.
- “ O let a holy flock await,
“ Num’rous around thy temple gate,
“ Each pressing on with zeal to be
“ A living sacrifice to thee !”

While this hymn was singing, I observed several persons drop their heads, and during the short interval of rest between the stanzas, heard now and then a deep sigh, and beheld some in tears. When the hymn was closed, the object of the meeting was briefly stated, and all were requested to kneel and unite in a few words of prayer. After prayer, the Pastor himself together with three other gentlemen who as I supposed were officers of the church, dispersed themselves throughout different parts of the room, and entered into conversation with the individuals who were pre-

sent. Here and there were clusters of persons with whom they conversed collectively. The conversation with individuals was sometimes continued two or three minutes, and sometimes elicited no answer. Sometimes it consisted of a single inquiry and an appended observation or two. And sometimes it continued for eight or ten minutes. So that at the close of the meeting there were none who had not the opportunity of a personal interview with their Pastor, or some one of us who assisted him. The conversation was conducted rather in a low tone of voice, and much as it would have been had the parties been alone in a private parlour. Very much of it I heard, and will now narrate with as much accuracy as I can.

Addressing himself to a middle aged man who sat near us, "Do you feel Sir," inquired the Pastor, "any special interest in the subject of religion?"

"I know not what to say," was the reply. "I do not feel as I did a few weeks since. I see that religion is important, and I know that I cannot be happy without it. The world looks dark to me. But I am for the most part very unconcerned. I am *ignorant*, and wish you to instruct me, and to deal with me plainly and faithfully."

"Have you ever been sensible," continued the Pastor, "That you are the enemy of God? Do you see for yourself that notwithstanding all his kindness and love you are still unwilling to forsake your sins, and fall in with the method of mercy by Jesus Christ."

"I fear, Sir," said he, "I do not feel this, though I know it is true. I have no proper conviction of my sins. My conscience is right, but my heart is wrong. My conscience tells me that God would do me no injustice if I should be left to perish. And yet my heart rises in dreadful opposition to his justice and sovereignty. I feel as though I could not submit to such a God."

"Do you think such feelings are right?" said his Pastor. "Would it be right for angels to feel thus toward the Everblessed God? Would it be right for saints? Is it right in you?"

"I know it is not right."

"And will you persist in what you yourself acknowledge to be wrong?"

"I know I am wrong; but what shall I do?"

"O what *would* you do, but be reconciled to God?" The blessed Saviour, who shed his blood for you; the Holy Spirit, who is now striving with you; your own conscience, which now reproaches you; all require you to cease from

“contending with your Maker. These rebellious
“feelings show you what is in your heart. They
“show you how unfit you are with such a spirit,
“to enter into the kingdom of God. You must
“give them up. Pray, pray for grace to give
“them up. They make you miserable here, and
“if persevered in, must make you miserable for
“ever.”

To a young man who had overheard the previous conversation, the Pastor said, “Can you give me some account of the exercises of your mind, my young friend?”

The youth was for a moment too much affected to speak; when his Pastor, with a tenderness that seemed to forbid reserve, inquired, “When was
“your attention first called up to the state of your
“own soul?”

“The first thing,” replied the young man, “that
“I saw, was at the lecture, the week before last.
“I saw that I was a sinner, and in danger of endless punishment. When I went home, I determined to seek religion. I made a solemn promise.
“I read the Bible, and prayed several times a day.”

“And have you found the Saviour?”

“No, I cannot find him.”

“And yet he says, *Seek, and ye shall find.*

"*Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* Does it seem to you that Christ is either "unable or unwilling to save?"

"I will tell you," replied the young man, "just "how I have felt. The last Sabbath morning, "you preached from these words, *The heart is "full of evil.* I thought you were *personal* in "your remarks. You showed me what a wicked "heart I had, and how full of evil it was. I "thought that all the people were looking at me, "and that you were showing them my wicked "heart. And I was displeased and angry. But "when I went home, I was very much distressed. "My mother said nothing to me, and this distress- "ed me more. I overheard her praying for me "in her chamber, and this distressed me still more. "I went and tried to pray for myself, and I could "not pray, and this distressed me more still. I "felt that I was lost. I thought I should never "find an interest in Christ. It seemed to me that "I was so wicked, I must perish."

"And how has it been with you, through the "week?"

"Just the same Sir. When I read the Bible "and try to pray, I feel that God is all the while "angry with me."

"He is a Holy God, and cannot look on sin."

"O Sir," replied the young man, "I know I must perish, unless God take away my obstinate heart and give me a heart of flesh."

"It is indeed so replied his Pastor. "*Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"

"I know it sir, I know it. Never can I enter into that kingdom with such a heart."

"*No never !*" was the reply ; and it was uttered with a tenderness and solemnity with which a father would address a dying child. "And never, unless God give you up to awful blindness, can you be happy any more on earth, with such a heart."

"Sometimes," said the young man, "the thought crosses my mind, that I had rather go back to my former stupidity, than remain as I am."

"O my dear young friend," said his Pastor, "strive and pray against such thoughts as these. The adversary would tempt you to such thoughts, and triumph over his poor, deluded victim, if he could thus stifle these convictions. He knows you would gain nothing by going back, but become ten-fold more the child of Hell than before. You may get rid of this distress, and lose these convictions ; but believe me, it will be only for a little while. They will all return,

“either in this world, or another, and in ten-fold
“power. And there will be nothing to relieve
“them then :—no inviting Saviour—no mercy seat
“no hope of pardon—no mighty healer—no
“peace-speaking blood of the cross :—no, nothing
“but an angry God, a lost soul and the most dis-
“tressing convictions forever.”

Here, the poor young man looked us both full in the face without uttering a word. The deep lines of sullen dejection were imprinted on his countenance, and he could neither weep nor speak. “O Eternity !” said the Pastor, while a deep sigh involuntarily escaped his bosom, “O Eternity ! Eternity !” responded the youth in a whisper, “there will be no end to eternity !” For a moment we were all silent. I could not help taking his hand, and saying with tears, *Is there no balm in Gilead ?*—He wept. “*Balm,*” said he, “balm for my wounded, guilty soul !”—Here, I observed his Pastor weep, while he distinctly uttered the ejaculation, “*Lord give us help from trouble !*”

“O sir,” replied the agitated youth, what shall
“I do ? I have felt all this week as though I hated
“God, and would fain flee out of his hands. I
“have been so long in this wretched state of mind,
“while so many others have been brought in
“rejoicing, that it seems to me as though God

"meant to give me up. It does no good for me to read, or pray, so long as God is against me."

"So long as you are against God," replied his minister, almost with an air of severity. "God will do you no wrong. He sees you. He hears you.—And yet he bears with you." "And then with subdued and tender accents, proceeded, "His love is infinite. Nothing but his patience and long suffering have kept you out of hell so long. Nor would he have showed you thus your guilt and danger, if he were not willing you should come to repentance. He wounds that he may heal. He waits that he may be gracious. There is bread enough in your Father's house, and to spare. O against what love are you uttering these ungrateful complaints! If you ever become his child, you will wonder that you stood out so long against his love and mercy."

There was a young lady just behind us, whose countenance wore a very different appearance from that of this unhappy youth. She was peaceful and yet solemn ; joyful and yet serious. It seemed as though the fountains of consolation were springing up in her mind, and her very visage

shone, I had almost said, like the face of Moses, when he came down from the mount.

"I perceive," Mary, "said her Pastor." that "your mind is more tranquil, than when I last "saw you."

She looked up, and smiled. "I have peace," said she, "sweet peace—yet I know not what to "think. I fear I am growing stupid. And yet I "am happy. I am afraid it is wrong for such "a sinner as I am to feel so happy."

"What makes you happy ? said her Pastor.

"I do not know, said she," my heart-risings "against God are gone ; and yet I have none of "the love I have heard others speak of."

"Does it appear to you that you are entitled to the promises of the gospel ?"

"Not that I know of," she replied. "I have "never asked myself that question. My anxiety is "gone ; my fear is that I have lost my convictions."

"How," said her Pastor, "does God appear to you."

"How ?—God is love. God is in Christ reconciling sinners unto himself. He is glorious in "holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders."

"Do you love him ?"

With great simplicity she replied, "I think I do "not *hate* him now. I have been thinking of his

"character and government, and love to think of them. They do not distress me, as they did once. You know Sir, they used to distress me. But I can think of him now as a sin-hating God, without desiring that he should be less holy.

"Mary," said her Pastor, distinctly, "does God appear glorious in your eyes for being a sin-hating, sin-avenging God?"

"He does," said she, "appear glorious."

"What do you think of yourself as a sinner, Mary?" inquired her Pastor.

"I have seen my own extreme vileness, Sir, and see it more and more; and yet I no longer wish to run away from God."

"And what," said her Pastor, "do you think of Christ?"

She simply answered, "His blood cleanseth from all sin."

"And can you not believe in him and receive him as your *own* Saviour, and say with Thomas, *my* Lord and *my* God!"

"I know If I do not believe in him I must perish."

"You know too, that God can be *just*, and justify every one that believeth. *This* is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. And will you not put

“honour upon God, by believing in him whom
“he hath sent?”

“Indeed, Sir, I know not what to say. I do not
“think I am a christian. I do not disbelieve, nor
“distrust God. Nor am I afraid to commit myself
“to the hands of the mighty Saviour. But I do
“not know that I am accepted of him. And if
“not, I cannot complain. I thought this afternoon
“of the Saviour’s love for sinners, and felt that I
could say with Job, *Though he slay me, yet will
I trust in him.* And there was so much meek-
ness and humility when she uttered this sentence,
that I could not doubt it bespoke her heart.

It was the sister of Mary, who, as I was after-
ward informed, sat next her. These sisters were
two of five children who, within a few weeks had
been brought out of darkness into God’s marvellous
light. Elisabeth, of whom I am now speaking,
was the elder.

“You expressed some relief from your anxiety,”
said her Pastor, “when you were at the meeting
last week, Elizabeth.”

“Yes Sir, I had some hope of having made my
“peace with God; and I think it is stronger since
“I saw you.”

Well, Elisabeth, I will leave my friend to con-

“verse with you, while I go to another part of the room. State your views and feelings to him, with the same frankness with which you would do to me.”

“What induces you to believe,” I enquired, “that you have experienced a change of heart?”

“My views and desires, Sir, are very different from what they once were.”

“Pardon me for inquiring, in what particulars they are different.”

“In many particulars, Sir, but especially toward God. I used to care nothing about God. I scarcely ever thought of him, and felt and acted much as I would have done were there no God. But now I think of none so much as him. It seems to me, I see him every where, and every where enjoy him.

“Are you *sure*,” said I, “that there is nothing you prefer above God.”

“I will not say I am *sure*, because it is a very easy thing for me to be deceived. But if my heart is set on any thing more than God, I do not know what it is. I am sure it is not wealth; it is not fashion and pleasure; it is not gay society; it is not fame nor any earthly good. God is more to me than all.”

“But why do you delight so much in God.”

I was struck with her reply, and wished that

all the world could have heard it—"Why should I not delight in him?"—

"And is there nothing in God," said I, "that displeases you?—no part of his character that you dislike?"

"Nō, nothing. There is nothing that is wrong. There is no blemish. God is infinitely lovely, and he does what is right. There is no reason why I, or any body else, should be displeased with God." And she said this with so much decision and meekness, that I observed it made a deep impression on several persons who sat near us.

"But," said I, "did you never, my young friend, look upon God as a hard master, and upon his law as a hard and severe law?"

"I used to think so she replied, when I thought at all. I used often to try to banish God from my thoughts. I used to endeavour to reason away my obligations to him. I used to think that as I could not make me a new heart, so until God performed this work for me, I could not be bound to love him, nor blamed for not loving him. In this way I used to contend with God, though I was not sensible of it at the time. But I have none of these feelings now."

"You have been a great sinner then, thus to contend with God."

“O I have been a great sinner. I am a great sinner still. I know if God should punish me according to my ill-desert, I must perish. And if I should perish, I know it would be just. It would be right—*exactly right*.” Here she wept, and said, “O how wonderful is it, that he should “forgive such a sinner !”

“But *how* can God forgive ? what becomes of his justice ?

“Sir, you have told us to day. He so loved the “world that he gave his only begotten Son, that “whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but “have everlasting life. The Lord hath laid on “him the iniquity of us all. He who knew no sin “was made sin for us that we might be made the “righteousness of God in him. I have no hopes “but here.

“But how is this,” said I, “and what do you “understand by it ?

“I do not know that I can tell you, Sir. I “am but a child in knowledge and grace. It is a “very precious truth to me, that Jesus died ; that “he bore my sins, and that his righteousness in “the judgment of God, is counted as mine.”

“But do you suppose that Christ was a sinner !”

“No ; but he bore *my* sins.”

“And because his righteousness is imputed to

“you, do you consider yourself less guilty and
“ill-deserving?”

“In *myself*, Sir, I am guilty and deserve to
“suffer ; but *in him* I hope to be acquitted from
“the punishment I deserve, because he endured
“it for me.

“And how does this method of salvation appear
“to you?”

“It is just what I need—Christ is my only Sa-
“viour. He is a full and complete Saviour. His
“cross is my only refuge. O, Sir, I have felt the
“worth and tasted the sweetness of the Saviour’s
“dying love, and long to tell it to the world.”

“Do you recollect that you were ever displeased
“with the doctrines of the Bible, and felt offended
“when you heard ministers preach on the subject
“of depravity, decrees, and election ?

“Often, very often. These doctrines were dis-
“pleasing to me. They disturbed me. But I do
“not complain of them now.”

“Why?”

“I do not know Sir. I cannot say that I under-
“stand them. But it appears to me that God has
“a right to do what he will with his own. We
“all deserve to die. He hath mercy on whom he
“will have mercy. I know he will do right.

“There is not a sparrow, or a worm,

“But is found in his decrees.”

"I leave all this with God. He is of one mind
"and none can turn him, and what his soul
"desireth that he doeth."

"And how do you feel toward God's people?"

"He loves them, and I love them. Thy people
"shall be my people, and thy God my God.

"How do you feel toward the work of God that
"is going on in this place?"

"When it first began, I felt opposed to it. I
"thought we should have a gloomy Summer, and
"that all my mirth was spoiled. When our dear
"father first spoke to us about the revival and about
"our own souls, I inwardly sneered, and thought
"all our pleasures were over. But I feel very
"differently now. It has been a memorable Sum-
"mer to our dear family, and to many precious
"souls in this place. It is in my heart to bless
"God that I did not leave town, as I thought of
"doing, and that I have not been called out of the
"world before his blessed Spirit came down."

"And *who* has brought you to this state of
"mind, and given you this peace and joy in be-
"lieving."

"None but God. His grace, his almighty and
"sovereign grace has done it. There was nothing
"in *me*.

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
"Wandering from the fold of God."

"I did not take a step till he led me. I withstood him as long as I could."

"And what if he had left *you* and taken *others*?"

"It would have been right. I was greatly comforted under a sermon our Pastor preached from this text. *I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father ! for so it seemed good in thy sight.*"

"It is a sweet thought, I replied. It made the weeping Saviour rejoice in spirit."

"O had he not pitied the state you were in,

"Your bosoms his love had ne'er felt ;

"You all would have lived, would have died too in sin,

"And sunk with the load of your guilt."

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,

"Or give the Creator delight !

"'Twas *Even so Father !* you ever must sing,

"Because it seemed good in thy sight.

"Then give all the glory to his holy name,

"To him all the glory belongs ;

"Be yours the high joy still to sound forth his fame,

"And crown him in each of your songs !

I now rejoined the Pastor. He was just taking his seat near an elderly man whose countenance

was unmeaning and inexpressive. What thought I can have induced this man to come to the Inquiring meeting? His Pastor treated him with a great deal of kindness and condescension, and though he was slow to speak, at length elicited the state of his mind in the following conversation.

"I perceive you are growing old rapidly, my
"good friend."

"Yes Sir, I am sixty eight years of age, a very
"ignorant man."

"Have you ever thought much about your
"soul."

"No, Sir, I have not. I have never read the
"Bible much. I have not attended church, nor
"kept the Sabbath.

"Have you not thought more of the subject
"within a few weeks?"

"I have been to church of late more than I
"used to go, and have been thinking of my sinful
"and miserable condition. But I do not know
"how to get religion. I want to repent and become
"a child of God, but do not know how to do it."

"Does any body prevent your repenting?"

"No, Sir."

"God has done a great deal to lead you to re-
"pentance. He has given you the Bible, and you
"say, you have neglected it. He has given you

"his Sabbaths, and you have neglected these. He
"has given you his Son, and you have neglected
"him. He has given you time enough to repent,
"and though he has long been grieved with
"you, yet has he borne with you these sixty years.
"What excuse can you have to offer when God
"calls you to his bar, why you have not repented?"

"I have no excuse, and yet I do not know *how*
"to repent."

"Well, I will tell you. *Think* of your sins.
"Reflect upon them *deeply*. Think how *many*
"they are, and how *great* they are, and how *long*
"you have sinned. Recollect that they have all
"been committed against a Great and Holy God ;
"a God who has been unspeakably kind to you,
"and who has given his Son to die for you ; and
"be *humbled and abased* that you are such a
"a sinner."

"O Sir, I know I ought to feel so."

"Think too, what evil your sins have done.
"Reflect upon your exceeding vileness and
"turpitude. See how your sins have grieved the
"people of God, and injured his cause, and
"ruined your own soul, and the souls of others,
"and crucified the Lord of glory ; and then loathe
"and abhor yourself and repent in dust and ashes.

"Ah me ! exclaimed the old man ! what a sinner
"I am !"

"Forsake your sins, exclaimed his minister.
"Break off your iniquity by righteousness and
"your transgressions by turning to God. And
"go with an humble and contrite spirit to the
"cross of Christ, and confess all your guilt there
"and ask the God of mercy, if there can be any
"hope for you now in this eleventh hour."

"I wish I could do it. It seems to me I
"would give the world if I *knew how* to go to
Christ."

"I have no doubt you desire to be delivered
"from your present burden, you are anxious to
"escape from the coming wrath ; but if you saw
"the plague and vileness of your heart, you would
"see that there is no good thing in it, and that the
"sweet exercises of genuine *repentance* you have
"never yet desired. Sure I am, that if you truly
"wish to repent, there is nothing in the universe
"to keep you from repenting."

While we were listening to this conversation, the attention of the Pastor was turned to a lady in a remote corner of the room. She was past the meridian of life, the mother of several children and much of a gentlewoman in her appearance and mien. One of her daughters was present, who had already expressed the hope of reconciliation

to God. I perceived that her Pastor addressed her with familiarity, and as though she had often been at the Inquiring meeting before.

Taking a seat on a bench immediately before her, he said, "Well madam, I hope you have given up the controversy, and enjoy peace with God.

She shook her head, and remained silent.

"Do you feel willing to be left behind, while so many are pressing into the kingdom?"

She replied, "I do not see that I can do anything more than I have done.

"Do you think, that when you come to stand at the bar of God, you will feel that you have done all you could?"

"What can I do more?" was her only reply.

"And *what* have you done?" said her Pastor. "*What* have you done, except sin against God all your days?" And what are you doing now, when his Spirit is so tenderly striving with you, except contending with your Maker?"

"But, sir, I cannot change my own heart. So the bible teaches me, and so you have instructed me often."

"Pardon me for inquiring," said the Pastor, "what is the object of this remark? Do you make it because you see and feel it to be true, or

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“because you want an excuse for not loving
“God? If it is a mere excuse for not giving
“your heart to God, it behoves you to be satisfied
“that it is such an one as God will accept. If it
“is not such as you yourself are persuaded God
“will accept, then do not utter it. Never, never
“utter it again. But if it is not because you want
“an excuse; if you feel this weighty truth; if
“you are deeply sensible that you are in the
“hands of God; if you know that you are so vile,
“that unless the living God, by the power of his
“grace, take from you the heart of stone, and give
“you a heart of flesh; then do you indeed see
“that you are in a lost condition.

“O sir,” she exclaimed, “I am just this lost
“creature! Why did God create me? Why
“did he give me existence only to make me mise-
“rable?” And she burst into a flood of tears.

There was no small emotion in the room. Every person saw what it was to contend with God. Numbers seemed moved by sympathy; but their ears were open to instruction. The lady continued weeping, while her pastor intreated her no longer to contend with God, and resist that sovereign power which alone could save her from despair.

Just at this moment, an incident took place, the

mention of which I may not suppress. The daughter of this lady was present, and had herself a few days before, found peace and joy in believing. During the previous conversation, unobserved, she had removed from a remote part of the room, and occupied a seat near her mother. She was deeply affected by her mother's state of mind, and with one arm thrown around her neck, and in a low beseeching tone of voice, said, *Dear mother! O the fulness there is in Christ! Come with us to this ocean of mercy!*" We were all in tears. We literally turned away to weep. "O Mrs. M——," said her Pastor, "the blame is on your side, and not on God's. God is right and the sinner is wrong. That ocean of mercy! Will you not repair with your children to that ocean of mercy?"

There was a young lady occupying a seat near the centre of the room, who had gathered around her six or seven others not far from her own age, with whom she was conversing, though in a subdued and scarcely audible voice.

One of this little cluster I observed wept bitterly. What a group, thought I! How delightful if this little company should all be seeking Jesus! if this youthful loveliness, these honours as they just begin to bloom, should be devoted to him!

"Sarah," said her Pastor, "do you retain your hope of the divine favour still?"

"O sir," said she, "I have been very happy since I last saw you. A little while after you left me, I was again oppressed with a sense of my desperate wickedness. I looked up and saw against what a God I had been sinning all my life long, and I was oppressed and filled with shame. O what a God he is! How good! how lovely! and yet how fearful! These thoughts of God filled my mind with great joy, and it seemed as though I could do nothing but admire the excellency and loveliness of God. God was very near to me. I could not help thinking how delightful it was to live in God's world—to be his creature—to be in his hand—to be his child—to call him my Father, and to love and trust him forever."

"The Bible," observed her Pastor, "If I mistake not, speaks of the glory of God *in the face of Jesus Christ.*"

"Yes, sir," said she, "and Dr. Watts beautifully paraphrases the thought.

"See where it shines in Jesus' face,
The brightest image of his grace,
God in the person of his son,
Hath all his mightiest works outdone."

"I see an infinite fulness and sufficiency in this
"salvation. He is a hiding place from the
"storm, a covert from the tempest, as rivers of
"water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a
"great rock in a weary land. I think I can say,
"Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief. But,
"sir, these dear friends of mine—I thought I
"could certainly persuade them all to come to
"Jesus ; it seemed to me so *easy* to come to him,
"and so wicked to stay away ; and Christ appears
"so lovely. But, O sir, I cannot persuade them.
"I desire to take them all in my arms and carry
"them to Christ." It seemed as though the young
ladies could scarcely refrain from loud weeping.
I was waiting to hear what my friend would
address to this interesting circle, but he simply
repeated the following lines :

"Welcome, welcome, dear Redeemer,

"Welcome to this heart of mine ;

"Lord, I make a full surrender,

"Every power and thought be thine ;

"Thine entirely,

"Through eternal ages thine."

There was one person present, who from his
appearance, I judged moved in the higher walks
of society, and who from his conversation, was a
very intelligent man, and not ignorant either of

letters, or the world. I afterwards learned that he was a counsellor at law of very respectable standing in his profession, and the father of a numerous family. As we drew near him, he rose and extended his hand to his minister, and remarked ;

“ Sir, this I presume is as unexpected to you, as
“ to me.”

“ It affords me great pleasure,” replied the clergyman, “ to meet you here. Are not some of
“ your children in the room ?”

“ One of my sons I saw as I entered the door.
“ Two weeks ago, I should have been not a little
“ displeased to have known of his being present
“ at such a place, but I rejoice now to *meet* him
“ even here.”

“ Your views of religious subjects then are somewhat changed ?”

“ I was once a confirmed Universalist, as you
“ well know, and I really believed that soul-de-
“ stroying system.”

“ And what has disturbed you in this belief ?”

“ Not long after the day of fasting and prayer,
“ which was set apart by the church about six
“ weeks ago, I had a conversation with my family
“ physician, who is a sensible and pious man, on
“ the subject of universalism. After he left me,
“ there was some inquietude on my mind. I felt

“unhappy, I knew not why. I took no pleasure in the world, and lost my zeal in my profession.”

“Perhaps you feared the doctrine of universalism was not true?”

“I cannot say that I *feared* it was false, or *desired* it might be true. I was desirous to see it as it is, let it be true or false. But, sir, I was greatly agitated on this subject, and so much so, that I could not sleep. I took my Bible and turned to those texts which I had long considered as a proof of my sentiments; but on carefully reading and considering them, they did not appear so conclusive as they had done.”

“What were your reflections?”

“I determined I would be on the safe side; and as I knew I had no religion, resolved to attend to it, and to repent and believe on Jesus Christ as the Saviour of lost sinners.”

“Did you find no difficulty in doing this?”

“I thought I could do it; and then if my sentiments concerning the salvation of all men should not prove true, I should be safe. Accordingly I set about it, but in a few days I relapsed into my old careless habits. This alarmed me, and I resolved to enter on the business again. Again I relapsed into carelessness and again I resolved to become religious; but to no

“better effect than before, until at length, I felt in
“some measure my dependance on God to enable
“me to keep my resolutions.”

“And what became of your universalism?”

“My confidence in it gradually weakened, and
“I had much anxiety and concern of mind.”

“How did you feel toward those truths of the
“Bible which stand opposed to universalism, and
“which have been so much insisted on during
“this season of the outpouring of God’s Spirit.”

“I contended with them, and even more than I was
“in the habit of doing when I was a confirmed
“universalist. The doctrine of the entire deprav-
“ity of the human heart, the doctrine of divine
“sovereignty and election appeared hard sayings.”

“Have you become reconciled to these doc-
“trines?”

“Permit me to give you a brief narrative.”

“On a particular occasion I was called to a
“neighbouring village. As I was riding alone,
“God was pleased so to discover to me my own
“heart, that for a considerable time I have no
“recollection of any circumstance or object about
“me. My attention was so entirely swallowed up
“by the dreadful discoveries of my own sinfulness,
“that I knew of nothing else which passed in my
“mind, until at length I found myself miles beyond

“the place of my destination, and the shadows of evening shut in upon me. I found my way to such lodgings as I could, but could not sleep. There was a heavy load on my mind. In the morning I returned home, without attempting to transact my business, and was unable for several days to go into my office.”

“Have you found relief? and if you have, how did you find it?”

“I scarcely know how to answer you, because though I do not feel happy, yet my burden has passed away. I found no relief until about ten days since, when feeling my absolute dependence on the sovereign will of God to dispose of me as he should see fit, I resigned myself into his hands, sensible that if he should change my vile heart I should be saved; but if not, and he should send me to hell, it would be perfectly just, and I should see it and know it forever.”

“Have you established the worship of God in your family?”

“No I have not, but it is my purpose to do so.”

“Will you do it this evening?”

“God helping me, I will.”

I was anxious to hear this conversation continued, but a collection of young men were sitting just behind us to whom I perceived the clergymen

was anxious to address himself. He remained standing, and in a tone of voice which all who were near him could hear, said;

“And which of you, my young friends, has any interest in this great subject? It is a time when God is drawing near and when it is awfully hazardous to trifle with the concerns of the soul.”

For a moment, there was no reply. At length one of the company said;

“Sir, we wish to obtain religion. We shall never have a better time. If we suffer this revival to pass away without becoming the children of God, we shall probably live and die in our sins.”

“And have none of you,” said the minister, “reason to believe you have made your peace with God?”

All replied in the negative except one, and he looked up as though he desired, but durst not give a different answer.

“James,” said the minister, “do you think you are a christian?”

“My distress is gone, Sir,” he replied, “but I am afraid I am not a christian. I feel willing now to be in the hands of God. I know that he is great and good, holy and gracious, and I am rejoiced that so many are turning to the Lord

"and loving him. But I am afraid I do not love
"him."

"James," replied his pastor, "I hope you will
"call and see me to-morrow. And you, my
"young friends, I know it is very possible that
"you may die as you have lived, without God
"and without hope. It is no small matter to en-
"ter into the kingdom of heaven. You are sin-
"ners, and under the condemnation of God's holy
"law. Already are you doomed to eternal death,
"and unless the execution of this sentence can be
"averted, and you can obtain pardon from your
"offended God, you must perish. But to obtain
"pardoning mercy, you must first see that you
"need it. You must see and feel that you are
"*lost*. Lost! lost! lost! O how certainly is the
"sinner *lost*; who is out of Christ! Death may come
"and find you *lost*. And then you cannot escape.
"No, you cannot escape the damnation of hell. O
"what a view is it to look upon such a collection of
"youth going down to endless, remediless ruin! Men
"and angels might weep over such a scene as this."

As we turned from this interesting group, and
approached a different part of the room, we passed
a young lady sobbing almost aloud. The Pastor
turned back.

"O Sir," said she, "I am a poor sinner, going
"down to hell."

"How long," said the minister, "have you been in this state of mind?"

"My mind was distressed to day, under the morning sermon; and my distress increased in the afternoon. I did not mean to come to this meeting, nor let any body know how I felt. But I am undone. I must become reconciled to God, or perish. I have been hanging over a precipice all my days, but never saw it until now."

"And if you see it now, so much the more inexcusable and guilty will you be, if you do not escape the gulf."

"But how can I escape? I would be glad to do it if I could."

"My young friend, what prevents your escaping, but your own reluctant heart?"

She still wept and we passed on to a young man who I afterwards ascertained was a professor of religion.

"I did not expect to see *you* at the inquiring meeting, said the minister."

"I suppose not, Sir," replied the young man. "As you well know, I once thought myself a christian. Nor did I mean, or desire to deceive myself, or be deceived in this hope. But when God appeared to revive his work among us, I thought it was a favourable season for me to en-

“ter into the foundation of my hopes, and examine
“the ground on which I stood. This thought
“was strongly impressed on my mind, especially
“for the greater part of the night, and I could not
“sleep for fear I was building on the sand. I
“then solemnly resolved to give up my confidence,
“if I could not find scripture evidence of a change
“of heart. And that evidence I cannot find. I
“am convinced I have never been born of God,
“On thursday evening last at the lecture, my
“hope perished.”

This young man was in deep distress. It seemed to me that he saw himself in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I could not help saying within myself, *The spirit of a man can sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* “Though I have professed religion,” continued this distressed youth, “almost four
“years, yet I just begin to feel that the Bible is
“true, that God is in earnest, that I am a lost sin-
“ner, and wholly in the hands of a sovereign God.”

Why is it, thought I, that ministers and the people of God have so much more sympathy for those who are professedly impenitent, than for the self-deceived? Are there no solitudes for the false professor? no sympathies for those who have a name that they live, while they are dead? There

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was a mournful tone and emphasis about every thing this young man spoke, that sunk to my soul. There were great tenderness and sincerity in his manner, and I felt that it was truly an awful thing to have a hope that might perish when God should take away the soul.

"I scarcely know," said the minister, "how to address you. It may be just as you say, that you have been deceived with a false hope. God often shows his mighty power in undeceiving the deceived at such a time as this. How kind is it in him to do so, and at a season when his Spirit is descending, not only to reclaim the backslider, and convert the self-hardened, but to awaken and convince, and convert the self-deceived! Be ever grateful to God, my young friend, for opening your eyes, and for not leaving you to make this melancholy discovery when it is forever too late."

"O sir," replied he, "I fear it is too late now."

"Why should you fear this?" replied his Pastor. "It is never too late, while you have opportunity to repent and believe the gospel. The blessed Saviour invites you now."

Toward the lower part of the room and near the entrance, sat a man of fine visage, gentlemanly appearance, and, as I should suppose, nearly

fifty years of age. As we turned our eyes toward the place where he sat, my friend remarked to me, "The gentleman you see near the door has been a great opposer of religion. He moves in the higher orders of society; has great influence, and a strong and well cultivated mind. Nothing could have brought him here this evening but the Spirit of God." We sat ourselves down beside him, and after a moments pause he himself broke the silence, and as it seemed to me, almost abruptly.

"It is here," said he, "it is here!"

"What is here?" replied his minister.

"It is here, just as you have preached. I hate his character; I hate his laws; I hate his government; I hate his Son. I have always acted from a sinful heart. I have never done any thing right. I used to think I had done many things that were right and acceptable in the sight of God; but I am all wrong. God is angry with me, and dooms me to hell. It is impossible for me ever to be happy. I shall soon be called to meet death, and stand before God; and I must perish! It seems to me, that with every thought, and every breath, I am waxing worse and worse, and only preparing to sink deeper into hell."

"How long Sir," said my friend, "have you been in this unhappy state of mind?"

"Sir, it is now three days, and it seems to me I cannot live. I heard to day that my son is happy in the hope of the gospel, and this has greatly distressed me on my own account."

"And can you not come and accept of mercy? All things are ready. The Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost. Why should you not take the water of life freely? God makes no hard conditions."

"They are hard to *me*. I feel that I can never save myself. If God does not take away my obstinate heart, and make me willing in the day of his power, I am as certain that I shall sink to hell, as that I am now in this house of prayer."

"I know it is so," replied the minister, "but is there not hope in that sovereign, omnipotent grace, when every other hope is fled?"

"There is," replied the trembling sinner, "hope no where else. But to my mind, it is awfully uncertain whether God will ever consent to make me a vessel of mercy. I am so vile, that it seems to me I *must* be left to perish."

"I know," replied his minister, "that it would be right. God may leave you to be the victim of your own obduracy. I cannot help you. No creature can help you; you are in God's hands."

"Yes," said he, "as the clay is in the hands of the potter."

"Go then, go to his mercy seat and throw yourself upon his sovereign power and love. Tell him you deserve to die; but inquire of him, whether there may not yet be hope? Go in the name and love of Jesus the Great Mediator. Go in happy and encouraged dependance on almighty grace. God says to every convinced sinner, *Let him take hold of my strength and be at peace with me, and he shall be at peace with me.*"

"O Sir," said he, "pray for me."

We rose to leave him, and just as we were going, we heard him say, "*Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.*" "Yes," answered I, "*He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*"

I could perceive that he wept. "I have not a word to say, observed he, if he casts me off." And he wept profusely.

It was now after 9 o'clock, and it was thought best to bring the meeting to a close. I have wept with the afflicted in the chambers of mourning. I

have stood by the couch of the dying sinner. I have passed through scenes where some twenty or thirty of my fellow men were in the agonies of dissolution, and groans, and sighs, and songs of praise mingled with every breath. But never before did I witness such a scene as this. Here were the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the ignorant and the learned, the mother and the daughter, together inquiring what they should do to be saved. Here was the alarmed and awakened sinner, just prepared to suppress the incipient remonstrances of conscience, and return to his wonted security, or lay hold of a premature and delusive hope. Here was the old professor, with all his former confidence shaken and his hopes shivering as though they had been blasted by the tempest. Here were the burdened and convinced, who felt as though their iniquity and their punishment were greater than they could bear, who sat speechless and condemned, while despair and anguish seemed settled on every feature. Here was one whose enmity to God but a few days since was so deep-rooted and implacable, that he seemed almost like a fiend in human form, now "clothed in his right mind," and soft and gentle as a lamb. Here was a circle of young converts into whose bosom light had

dawned like the rays of the morning, and who had just begun their everlasting song. And here were others who for weeks had been under deep dejection ; who complained that wearisome nights were appointed unto them, and who were still wading through deep waters and thick darkness. I could not but advert to the glory of that scene at Sinai, when the camp of Israel trembled, and even Moses said, *I do exceedingly fear and quake*. But though it was a time of trembling, it was a time of awful stillness. It was the still small voice which made the prophet "wrap his face in his mantle." God was there, and in the glory of his existence, power, justice, mercy, sovereignty and faithfulness.

I felt no small degree of solicitude that so solemn a meeting should leave a right impression on every mind present. And while this thought was passing through my mind, my worthy brother rose and made in substance the following appropriate and affecting remarks.

My dear friends, I have been deeply interested in this meeting. I trust we shall all remember it, and carry the remembrance of it to our graves, and to the bar of judgment. God grant that we may *all* bear it in humble and grateful remembrance, when his ransomed ones come to Mount

Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads !

Some of you, I would fondly hope, God has made willing in the day of his power. O what a subject of contemplation to a benevolent mind ! To be redeemed from the bondage of sin and receive the adoption of sons ; to be plucked as brands out of the fire, and set forth to shine as lights in the world ; what a change is this ! How immeasurable the goodness of God in making you the subjects of his grace and the heirs of his kingdom ! Others are left blinded by the deceitfulness and chained by the depravity of their own hearts, while *you* are brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, and enjoy the liberty of the sons of God. O will you not feel that you are not your own, but bought with a price, and glorify God in your bodies and spirits which are his ? "By their *fruits* ye shall know them." God grant that you may hold on, and hold fast, and hold out to the end !

But what shall I say to some persons present ? Beloved friends, some of you have never yet seen the plague of your hearts. You are not thoughtless. You are not immersed in the enjoyments of this perishable world. You are afraid of death and eternity and the wrath of God. You have

formed solemn resolutions to enter on a new course of life ; and you do not as yet see any insuperable difficulty in your way. But my dear friends, you are *bound*—bound by the cords of sin. Your feet stand on slippery places. It is a very doubtful matter whether you will ever enter into the kingdom of God. You may live through this revival, and become more and more hardened. And you may at last, see many come from the North and the South, the East and the West, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves cast out. O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night *for you* who are thus grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

There are some among you also, whom I would fain comfort, but may not, because they stay away from Christ. You feel the burden of your sins, and yet refuse to come to the Saviour. You fear that you are condemned, and well may your fear it. God is angry with the wicked every day. So long as you are out of Christ there is cause for fear. If you die without an interest in his atoning blood, nothing can keep you from everlasting burnings. And who can tell when death will invade your pillow ?

Who can tell, but you have well nigh exhausted the divine long-suffering, and may soon be called to give up your account? O consider that you are going down to hell. This night, this hour, turn and live. If you have nothing of your own to plead, see the fulness, the unspeakable fulness of Christ. If you have no good thing, come as you are to Jesus Christ. If you are utterly unworthy, remember it will not make you worthy so stay away from Christ. If you deserve to sink to hell, come and tell him your ill desert; confess it all; throw yourselves at his feet; and cast yourselves upon his free and sovereign grace. Go from this house humbled and repenting sinners. Go silently to your closets. Look not, speak not to creatures, but to Christ. He is the hiding place. He will save you by himself alone, or leave you all to perish. He will have all the glory, or you shall never join the song of his redeemed.

After these remarks, which were listened to with eagerness and tears, we all bowed ourselves before God, in a short prayer, and the exercises of the evening were closed with the following hymn :

“Come, ye weary, heavy laden,
“Lost and ruin’d by the fall;

If you tarry till you're better,
"You will never come at all :

"Not the righteous—

"*Sinners* Jesus came to call.

"Let not conscience make you linger,

"Nor of fitness fondly dream ;

"All the fitness he requireth,

"Is to feel your need of him :

"This he gives you—

"'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.

"Lo ! th' incarnate God ascended,

"Pleads the merit of his blood ;

"Venture on him, venture wholly,

"Let no other trust intrude :

"None but Jesus

"Can do helpless sinners good."

The last two lines were repeated with a sweet and subdued emphasis, and seemed to reach every heart.

"None but Jesus,

"None but Jesus,

"Can do helpless sinners good."

I returned to my lodgings, and gave thanks to the Father of lights that I had been permitted to witness such a scene. The meeting for prayer in the school room, I learned from Mrs. S——, was truly a blessed meeting. The next morning we

awoke early, and pursued our journey with emotions we shall not easily forget. We rode over the plain, and began to ascend the hills just as the sun dawned. Whether my mind had become unusually tranquil and elevated by the scenes I had witnessed, or whether some kind and gracious influence moved it at that sweet hour, I cannot tell. But joys that were past were brought back upon my soul, and I was reminded of the hour when I have hoped *old things passed away, and all things became new*. I then saw God in every thing and was happy. So now, every thing around me was full of God—O how full of God! The plain, the village, the distant mountains as I stopped to look back upon them, were delightfully resplendent with the goodness, wisdom and power of their Great Maker. The very light and atmosphere seemed all full of God. My mind was as calm as the soft breezes which fanned the forest, and buoyant as its bending foliage. It seemed to me the face of nature was never lighted up with such smiles before. The distant horizon was spread out far as the eye could extend itself, like the bosom of a peaceful lake. Just hovering over its remote verge, was a deep mild cloud, resembling a chain of mountains stretching along for leagues on either side, while

in its rear the rising sun shed upward his blushing radiance, every where waking the melody of praise.

No. IV.

LETTER TO A YOUNG CLERGYMAN.

NEW YORK, Nov., 1836.

Rev. and Dear Brother :

I can truly sympathize with you when you say, "I feel myself to be a very unprofitable minister." Nor do I know that I can give you any "hints" that will be of use to you in your great and important work. There is a single point in relation to which I will venture to throw out some suggestions.

Will you indulge me a few moments, while I direct your attention to that part of ministerial labour which is to constitute the great business of his life,—I mean *the instructions of the pulpit*.

I know not how you can more magnify the pastoral office, than by exalting, and performing acceptably and profitably, the *appropriate services of the sacred desk*. By far the most important part of your labours will be found in the duties which devolve upon you as a *public teacher*.

“Go, TEACH *all nations*”—“A bishop must be apt to TEACH”—“The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to TEACH others also”—“As ye go PREACH”—“PREACH the word”—“We PREACH Christ crucified”—“Faith cometh by HEARING”—“It pleased God, through the foolishness of PREACHING, to save them that believe.” What is the import of these and similar thoughts, if they do not inculcate the idea, that the first and great business of a minister of the gospel is to become a *public teacher—an able minister of the New Testament*.

The design of God in the gospel of his Son is to rescue innumerable millions from the consequences of the first apostacy, and fit them by the power of his grace for the joys of his right hand. But they are *sitting in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death*. The instrument—the only instrument of their moral renovation is truth—his own truth. Had the Holy Scriptures of themselves been sufficient to constitute ~~this~~ instrumentality, he would have given the world only the Holy Scriptures. But he has appointed a distinct order of men, whose special and responsible employment is to illustrate, defend, and enforce the truth which he has revealed; to call up the attention of a world that lieth in wicked-

ness ; and in humble dependance upon his Spirit, *to turn them from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.*

There is wonderful wisdom in this arrangement. It is one of the great peculiarities of Christianity, that its Founder has instituted such a class of men as the public teachers of his religion. Orders of men there have been, and still are in Pagan lands for the performance of religious ceremonies, and to “conduct the pomp of lustrations and sacrifices ;” but I have yet to learn if there be any such order, either in ancient or modern times, except under the system of religion revealed in the Bible, set apart for the inculcation of moral and religious truth. On the other hand, the policy of false religions has been to excite the curiosity of men without gratifying it ; to throw around their oracles the air of mystery ; to hold the world in the bondage of ignorance ; and to have the credit of knowing what none but those who had intercourse with the gods knew.

The divine institution of the Christian ministry gives great weight and importance, in my humble judgment, to the instructions of the sanctuary. A true religion is thus invested with a sort of self-perpetuating power. There is no other way in which the knowledge and worship of the

true God be can maintained. No religion, which does not owe its continuance to the wicked passions of men, can stand long without an order of religious instructors. The *pulpit* distinguishes Christian lands from all other lands, whether Pagan, or Mahometan. The pulpit is the defence, the strength, the glory of the church. And hence the history of the pulpit furnishes the moral history of the world. There is no institution that exerts so powerful an influence on the wide circle of human interests as this. Under God, the temporal and eternal well being of mankind are suspended upon a spiritual, faithful, able ministry. As the means of preserving the minds of men from the seductive and pernicious influence of error and wickedness, and turning them to the paths of life and peace—as the depository of truth and directory in morals and duty—such a ministry is *the light of the world*.

I do not depreciate the Christian press, when I say it never was designed for the instruction of the great mass of mankind. Constituted and conditioned as they ever have been, and now are, the mass of men have neither information nor time to be intelligent readers. *To the poor the gospel is preached*. Not more certainly is truth the foundation of knowledge, holiness, and happiness, and

the gospel the system of truth, than the living teacher is the great means of making known the gospel. I fear none of us appreciate as we ought the immense importance of *preaching*. Even the most intelligent portion of the reading community derive their religious sentiments from the sacred desk. Few, very few of them are readers of religious books. Other streams there are; but a well furnished pulpit is the fountain of religious knowledge. I have no doubt that the public instructions of the sanctuary mould the moral intellect and character of men, more than any other, and all other causes combined.

Can this be doubted, if we look at the real state of the case? Think of such men as Edwards, or Witherspoon, or Davies, or Chalmers, having access to some five hundred, or two thousand minds, two or three times in each week;—minds that are broad awake, and perhaps intensely interested! Such a preacher puts a volume of well digested instruction, upon subjects the most deeply interesting and important that can be conceived, not into the hands of a solitary individual, or of a family, but simultaneously into the hands of hundreds. He does this one hundred and fifty times a year. Who does not see that if his own mind be taught of God, and laboriously disciplined, and

liberally furnished, and if he is faithful to his trust, an immense amount of truth must thus be poured upon the benighted intellect of men, even within the short compass of a very few years? Let such a ministry be widely and densely scattered throughout the land, delivering the truth, *not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*; and how soon would it bloom like Eden and become as the garden of the Lord! Not to a village, a city, or an extended district, would such a ministry confine its influence; but like the sun, its going forth would be from the end of the heaven, and its circuit would be unto the ends of it; and nothing would be hid from the heat thereof.

Is it not an amazing privilege to have access to such a mass of mind as is submitted to an instructive and faithful minister of the gospel with every returning day of the Son of Man—thus putting at his controul one seventh part of human life for the great purpose of moral and religious instruction. “The great praise of Socrates,” says Dr. Johnson, “is that he drew the wits of Greece from “the vain pursuit of natural philosophy to moral inquiries.” The great privilege of the gospel ministry is that it turns the minds of men from the vain pursuit of all their philosophical specula-

tions to the law of God and to the cross of Christ. It is no wonder the great Apostle exclaimed, "*Who is sufficient for these things!*" Is there not a responsibility attached to the services of the pulpit that might well make an angel tremble? O who that duly reflects on the solemnity of such a calling, must not be oppressed, if not overwhelmed! Nor is there any consolation in the midst of this fearful solicitude—no, not even from the promised presence of his Saviour,—to the man who seeks not, labours not, prays not thus to impress and penetrate the minds of those committed to his charge.

In the whole course of your ministrations, therefore, let your mind be directed toward that department of labour to which it must always be mainly applied. Aim early, aim constantly to furnish yourself to become a preacher. Every thing you do, or leave undone should have influence on your usefulness as a preacher. Instruction from the pulpit is to be your great business. It is a part of a ministers duty, which holds the first place, and which may never be yielded to any other. No other contributes so much to his usefulness. Other duties he has. He must visit the sick and the dying. He must bind up the broken hearted in the house of mourning. He

must lift his consolatory and warning voice in the land of silence and amid the memorials of the dead. He must be watchful too, how he neglects to cultivate those social affections whose cheerful and benignant influence the piety of the gospel elevates and purifies, and which wind their way into the kindest sympathies of those he serves. But after all, he must remember that his great business is to prepare for the public service of the house of God. In no other ought he to be, and for no other does he need to be so well furnished. Nothing may interfere with his duty of preparing for the Sabbath. Next to actual immorality and the want of personal religion, there is no such defect in a minister's character as deficiency in his public instructions. I look upon the minister who neglects the wants of the whole body of his people from a false regard to the wants of single family, or a single individual, as criminally unfaithful to his high and holy trust. Judge ye whether it is the more profitable to discourse instructively, appropriately, tenderly, with a single family, or to discourse instructively, appropriately, tenderly with the assembled tribes of God's Israel? I would not have you depreciate pastoral visitation. God forbid! But I would have you appreciate the paramount duties of the Sanctuary. A minister

should *never* leave the place of study and prayer, except for the performance of duties which do not interfere with his preparations for the pulpit. I have known men who devoted five days in the week to pastoral visitation, and satisfied their consciences with a single day's preparation for the Sabbath. And I have heard their congregations exclaim, *My leanness! my leanness! wo unto me!* And I have seen their once verdant and prolific field of labour becoming like the heath in the desert.

Paul counsels Timothy, *to give attendance to* READING. This young disciple was on his preparatory course. And so are you. And so am I. And so are those our fathers who *make their profiting appear into all*. In modern times, we are in the habit of making a distinction between the preacher and the Pastor. But it is a distinction originating with men. The word of God makes no such distinction. The duty of a Pastor is to *feed* his flock. And how shall he feed them? When the God of Israel promised distinguished blessings to his ancient people, what does he say he will give them?—Wealth?—honour?—power?—triumph over their enemies? *I will give you*, says he, *pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with* KNOWLEDGE and

UNDERSTANDING. In the acceptation which the scriptures attach to the term, a good Pastor cannot be a bad preacher, nor can a good preacher be a bad pastor ; though in the modern acceptation, it might be said that a good pastor may be a bad preacher, while a good preacher may be a bad pastor.

The career of a faithful minister of the gospel, is a career of continued, unwearied, unrelaxed preparation. No man can teach what he has not learned. Thus far you have been not so much preparing to preach, as preparing to study. The stock of knowledge which a young man lays up in a Theological Seminary, and in a few of the early years of his ministry will be exhausted in a very little while. Nothing will save him from absolute barrenness, if he be not a progressive and perpetual learner. Native talent will go but a little way, and will last but a little while, where a minister's object is not progressively to obtain religious instruction. No vigour, or vivacity of intellect, no colloquial powers, no social intercourse can supply the defect of an uninformative, monotonous, jejune pulpit. If you would not that your high and holy office be debased and degraded by aiming at other objects than the spiritual and eternal interests of men, you will direct the con-

centration of your powers to the services of the sanctuary. Nothing will divert you from this design. Thought, time, reading, study, observation, watchfulness, prayer, all are necessary in order to *make full proof of your ministry*. Your discourses must be well and thoroughly digested by your own mind and heart, if you would have them profitable to them that hear you. And *if you are successful in this exercise, you must delight in it*. You must have a passion for study. As one of the first qualifications for the office of a minister of the gospel is a decided predilection for the office, so no man will be likely to be well furnished for the services of the pulpit, without a decided predilection for that kind of effort by which he becomes furnished. There are indeed a few men—very few—of too mercurial a cast to contend successfully with the toil of preparing a well digested discourse, and who require the excitement of an audience, the incidents of the occasion, and the tones of their own voice, to give energy to their conceptions, and to their minds a propelling power. And if such men ever become profitable preachers, it is only by taking unwearyed pains to furnish their minds richly with all knowledge, and to leave no faculty without the fullest and completest cultivation.

As to the "best methods of successful preparation for the pulpit," I feel no small degree of diffidence in submitting any suggestions. Your very inquiry on this subject indicates that your mind is on the right track. It is of no inconsiderable importance to the usefulness of a minister that the *subjects* of his public discourses be wisely selected and appropriate to the condition of his people. The youthful ministry are very apt to be determined in their selection of subjects by their own resources ; whereas a rigid determination, so far as is possible, to furnish *appropriate* instruction, while it would necessarily augment their resources, would commend them to every man's conscience in the sight of God. I need not tell you that a preacher needs a *Common Place Book*, as much as an antiquary, or a statesman ; and that the more it is enriched, the more certainly will he give variety, and richness, as well as tenderness and power to his illustrations of God's truth. I am confident that I have been the loser by inattention to this article until comparatively a late period in my ministry. You will of course also have your *Text Book*, where you will note down from time to time such subjects for sermons as strike you, and where you will make such references to valuable thoughts as may fall in your

way in the course of your general reading and reflection. If I mistake not, you may find the following hint of some service. In your daily and careful study of the Scriptures, you will find now and then favoured hours, when light shines upon the sacred page ; when your heart burns within you ; when your mind is active, and almost every paragraph and clause suggest a topic and a method for a sermon. I have found it important to make the most of such seasons, even by turning aside from my projected labours and employing several hours together in sketching plans for future discourses. The fruit when ripe must not only be shaken from the tree, but stored away with care for future use, otherwise it will wither and become unsavoury. Do not trust to memory to retrace these thoughts, but commit them to writing, so that without labour you can call them up when you need them. Such skeletons will always come to good service ; and when well elaborated, will rarely disappoint your first vivid impressions. I have known ministers who were perpetually complaining for want of subjects for their public discourses ; but I cannot but think that you will rarely be at a loss for subjects, if you are habitually and prayerfully familiar with *the Bible* ; but rather will your Text Book be always rich, and

far in advance of your necessities. *We* become exhausted without much difficulty; *the Bible* never.

If you *write* your sermons, which I strongly recommend, never allow yourself to prepare more than one written discourse a week. One sermon a week, well planned, well digested, carefully written, and faithfully applied, is labor enough for any man who allows himself any time for intellectual improvement. One such sermon a week will enable you to draw upon your Text Book for two or three others without much preparation. In your most laboured discourses, let the force of your mind and the ardour of your heart be laid out in the application of your subject. Ministers often fail in this, and it is a sad failure. In a word, make every discourse as good as you can make it. Sure I am, my dear brother, that if you are like the writer of this letter, you will find defects enough in your best performances to fill you with discouragement.

One thought more: Never spoil a good subject for want of time. Rather take an old sermon, or preach without writing, and give yourself whatever time your subject requires, be it less, or more. As a general rule never *write* a hasty sermon. Rather cast yourself upon God, and go

to the pulpit expecting strength according to your day. Under such exigency *Bene precasse est bene studuisse.*

Two things you will find indispensable to profitable preparations for the pulpit:—prayer and toil. You must be a man of *prayer*. Prayer will give you thought, tenderness, and a power of feeling which nothing else can give. Sermons are heartless, lifeless things that are not elaborate with prayer. The difficulties of your work, and your own weakness invite you to your closet. If you look to yourself only, all is darkness, discouragement and despair. *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be all of God.* There is no substitute for Prayer. And you must consent to *labour*. There is no severer toil than the labours of the sacred ministry. Other men may rest; may retire from business and enjoy the fruits of their acquisitions; but there is no rest, no retirement for the minister of the gospel. The very Day of Rest of others, is a day of labour and solicitude with him. The duties of one Sabbath are scarcely fulfilled, and his thoughts are upon his preparations for another. And when he looks forward through life, he sees no end to his toil but in the grave. There is rest not until the battle is fought and the victory won.

Forgive me this freedom. My love for you, my interest in your usefulness, and your condescension in laying this burden upon me have given me this boldness. The fields are white to the harvest, my young brother, and you have everything to encourage you in your toil. The Captain of your salvation is with you, and you may burnish and gird on your armour. With a bosom glowing with the love of Jesus, renewedly pledge yourself *whether you live, to live unto the Lord; and whether you die, to die unto the Lord*. As one of the stewards of the divine bounty, go and unlock the cabinet of his grace to your impoverished fellow-men. As a messenger of his mercy, go and open the fountains of life to a dying world. Go, herald of peace, and wreath the promises around the brow of the dejected, and mitigate the woes of the desponding. And when your benevolence is satiated, and you ask not to be instrumental in saving another soul from death, then may you desire to rest from your labours.

With fraternal love,

Yours, G. S.

No. V.

THE PANORAMA.

WILL the world ever be persuaded that all expectations of happiness are delusive that are not founded on God? The soul of man is a ruined, undone existence—a poor deserted, dejected thing, that has not God for its refuge and joy. Give it all of earth that it solicits; multiply around it the ten thousand gratifications of sense; increase within it the still more numerous and delightful pleasures of thought; and if they terminate on earth, its restless desires, and its still more restless imagination, disappointed and deceived, are perpetually in pursuit of something new, some untried good.

I have seen those who imagined they had found the good they were seeking after. But when I have sat down with them in their retirement, have become familiar with their thoughts, and sympathized with their joys; I have marked their solicitude, and uniformly seen that

in a little while their sunshine of happiness is obscured by clouds.

Such were the thoughts that passed through my mind as I sat one evening at my window gazing upon the busy scenes which everywhere met my eye. The stir and clamour of a populous city kept on unceasingly around me. The gleaming lights, the quick steps, the passers by, the rattling of wheels combined to complete the confusion. Above, as in contrast, the heavens stretched their immoveable canopy, where the bright stars kept their distant and permanent home. All on earth seemed variable and tumultuous ; all above, still, constant and unchangeable. As the night advanced, and the bustle and noise abated, I became so deeply immersed in reflection, as gradually to lose all consciousness of objects around me. They slowly disappeared, and in their place an isolated stage or platform rose before me. At the first, I could discover nothing but its dim outline ; but by degrees, it took a more definite and palpable form ; and as my eye became accustomed to the view, I could discern miniature human figures, swarming in countless numbers upon its arena. Some seemed to be pursuing their way slowly, as though occupied with intense thought ; others were hurried on with restless activity. Here, was

a group holding amicable intercourse ; there, two hostile bands arrayed in mimic conflict. The scene seemed indeed a world in miniature, where each station, each employment had its petty representative. The tradesman was vending his wares ; the merchant grouping with his fellows upon the mart of traffic ; the student with his book ; the orator at his desk ; the idler lounging listlessly on his way. There were children also careering by in their sports. As I watched more closely, I observed that occasionally, as if by untoward accident, some of these automata became severed from the mechanism which linked the whole together, and suddenly disappeared. The scene however was so crowded and confused, that it was some time before I discovered that this occurrence was common to them all. Some indeed vanished as soon as they appeared ; others passed some way across the stage ; and a few I could trace even to its extreme verge, but eventually their fortune was the same with all the rest. In the midst of their restless career, all in their turn disappeared, and their places were occupied by a new succession of the same busy figures. As I watched their hurried motions, their strange gesticulation, their striving and pushing heedlessly on their way, I was moved to smile, and exclaimed, " What a singular, what an unmeaning scene ! "

"Dost thou smile?" said a voice near me. "Look again. It is the Panorama of human life." As I looked again, everything appeared to increase in magnitude. The curtain which overhung the scene seemed to be gradually extended, until it reached and became commensurate with the heavens. From its dark-folds the stars shone out mildly, obscured at intervals by passing clouds. The petty stage upon which it had before rested was magnified into a world, and the figures which traversed it so incessantly, became living, breathing men, crossing to and fro upon its surface. The smile fled from my lips, and I watched it with redoubled interest. The scene now had a voice which pierced to the inmost depths of my heart. A complete and perfect picture of human life was presented to my imagination, with all its varied peculiarities distinctly exhibited. Some were upon the mart of business, listening to the details of profitable adventure, and planning a thousand ways to add to their increasing wealth. Others were buried in vain amusements, and seemed to derive their highest gratification from the pleasures of sense. There were groups of labourers and artisans employed in useful industry. Farther on were the votaries of science crowding to her gorgeous temples. Pride was rolling

in his chariot, Poverty gleaning the refuse of the streets, and the children were at their sports. All seemed incessantly busy, and alternately enwrap and wearied with their pursuits. Amid the tumult, strife and gaiety which prevailed, one and another would suddenly disappear from the scene. The child in the height and bloom of its buoyant life was arrested by the cold grasp of Death, and, damp with a mother's tears, was coffined, and borne away no more to revisit the world. The youth, the man passed in a moment from the scene where all their hopes seemed centered, ushered thence by the same remorseless hand. Nor did the aged escape from the common destiny. Yet still the bustle and activity of all around continued unabated. They seemed not to heed the fate of those who were snatched away, or scarcely to grieve for their absence, but hurried forward in their course as though in the pursuit of some invaluable good.

"What seek they so ardently?" I exclaimed aloud. "The object of this search must be of great moment, since they are thus eager in the pursuit. Yet what do they attain, but Death? Is it this? Is it repose from that unceasing restlessness, that seems inflicted as a curse upon them?"

"Nothing is farther from their thoughts, neither

"does death bring repose to such as these," said the same voice which I had before heard.

"What then do they seek?"

"HAPPINESS."

I could not speak for wondering at this reply. I knew that they were my fellow-men, and wept for their delusion, remembering my own. Can it be so?—I thought—can self-deceit carry its victims so far? Will men never awake to a sense of their true interest? Are all these seeking after happiness? Can those thus flatter themselves who are plunged in the pleasures of sin; who seek their own to the injury of others—this world at the expense of another—themselves rather than God?

As I continued to watch what was passing before me, I soon discovered that the success of these infatuated beings in their search for happiness, was such as might be expected from the means they adopted to attain to it. Hope continually animated them, but a hope never realized. Their efforts were unceasing, but vain. Boisterous mirth, exultation, self-gratulation, sometimes lighted up their features, but these emotions would quickly subside, leaving them a prey to disquietude and remorse. The mart of business was a scene of trivial vexations, murmuring, and mutual distrust.

The field of labour and the occupations of industry were crowded with care and hardship, with turmoil and disappointment, and with glittering phantoms that were embraced for substantial reality. Pleasure lighted up its gaudy lamp, while the thoughtless insect that gaily fluttered around it was consumed by its flame. Power struggled over the arena of its conflicts, grasped its little world, and wept that it had not another world to conquer. The sons of pride, slow to learn that earthly good could deceive them, wandered from one source of expectation to another, perpetually disappointed. Even childhood, joyous and careless as it seemed, showed by its continual change and restlessness, that its ultimate desires were unattained. There were hidden recesses also all around this vast scene, which though they courted not the eye, were every where receiving this busy multitude in untold numbers. Here was one indicated by its meagre ornament, where had withdrawn the children of obscurity and insignificance, of disappointment and poverty, of pain and disease. Here was another, hung in sable, where many a hope was extinguished, and many a swollen and broken heart had retired to conceal its sorrows. And here was another—the place of lamentations and tears—where many an accent of woe was heard, and many a sigh was

extorted, which no resolution and no pride of character could suppress.

If there were exceptions to these, I saw them here and there in an humble individual, who in all his course had his eyes stedfastly fixed on heaven. Almost perpetual tranquillity seemed to rest upon his features. Seasons of trial at times assailed him, and misfortune and self-humiliation often cast a cloud over his brow; but it was a cloud coloured with the hues of the rainbow. When my eye followed such a one to that grave into which the rest sank with such reluctance, and not a few of them with despair, I could not discover a regret or a fear interrupting his repose. When Death enfolded him in his cold arms, he seemed insensible to his terrors and fell calmly to rest. I could well understand that such had rightly sought and had truly attained lasting happiness; but for the rest, their object seemed uncertain, their exertions useless, their life a troubled sea, their death unsoothed by remembrance or expectation. And could you ask them, one by one, each would confess that it is a vain thing to have set his affections on the earth.

"Thou art thyself an actor in this scene," said the voice. "Examine thy heart and life. See, if

"thine own search has not been after happiness—
"if thou hast obtained it—and from whence."

I listened,—I gave myself up to thought, and as the scene before me slowly disappeared, reflections like the following passed through my mind.

It is kind in the Father of mercies to disappoint the hopes that rest on earth, that the soul may find her rest in him. Earth may satisfy the un-intellectual creation, but can never satisfy a mind that pants for immortality. The very largeness of its desires makes it unhappy. This world has not enough for such a grasping, undying existence. All excellency and all blessedness meet in God and are derived from him. The Moon at midnight shining upon the dark ocean, the distant promontory towering upon the tempest-tost mariner, the morning star arising on the benighted wanderer of the desert, the opening of the Spring in all the richness and beauty of its vegetation after the chill, bleak blasts of Winter have gone by, are not more gladsome than the light of his countenance when it pours its consolations upon the soul.

Ye then, who are allured by the imaginations of future greatness—ye who are seduced by the hope of wealth—ye who are enchanted by the prospects of pleasure—ye who are charmed by endearments

which seem to have the power of beguiling every sorrow, and by a sort of secret incantation controuling the troubled mind ; learn from the experience of ten thousand hearts, that this world is but a conflict of desires and expectations which it can never gratify. Pursue it as you will ; distribute as you will all its enjoyments ; neither its knowledge nor its riches, neither its attachments nor its honours, neither its leisure nor its toil can fill the void which in every virtuous mind is occupied by the love of God. You must look where no human eye has never penetrated to find happiness out of him.

No. VI.

MORAL GRADATIONS.

THERE is a vast range of moral existencies within the divine empire, from the lowest and vilest, to the most pure and exalted. There are also almost endless gradations of happiness and misery, each of which is determined by its distance, or nearness to Him who is the source and fountain of all good.

If you begin at the lowest point of depression in this vast series, you must look into the world of perdition. Of all beings in the universe, these are at the greatest distance from the Father of lights. There is in their moral nature no resemblance to him, no tendency of moral feeling toward him : but rather everything that recoils and starts back from the knowledge and fellowship of the "first Fair and the first Good." They shun the tokens of his presence ; and if the sentiment of joy ever throbs in bosoms so guilty and miserable, rejoice

that there are eternal, impassable barriers which separate them from him before whom they fear and tremble. And He draws not nigh to them, except in the expression of his wrath. His love never cheers those gloomy abodes of malignity and despair. The light of his countenance never darts across the gulph to sooth and refresh their forlorn and desolated minds. The angels of his mercy never pass those adamantine gates, or scale those walls of fire. It is a world of unmingled gloom and terror, of unavailing sighs and bitterest despair. O there is no source of misery deeper than this universal and perfect alienation from God. It flows out in streams of unmingled wormwood and gall. It is a lake of fire. It is an ocean of sorrows. The bosoms in which it dwells constitute the most perfectly wretched class of existencies in the universe; inhabiting a world everywhere filled with sighs and anguish—replete with agony—hung round with the symbols of the second death—enveloped, alternately with the blackness of darkness and the lurid corruscations of the flame that is not quenched.

Somewhat above, and just on the confines of these dreary abodes, are the dwellers in Pagan lands. There are vast tracts of this inhabited globe that are covered with the veil of ignorance

and beneath which are millions of the human race in spiritual death. Altar after altar may be seen alternately fresh with the blood, putrid with the carcasses, and paved with the bones of these deluded victims of idolatry ; while at all their shrines, and under the open light of the sun, may be seen licentiousness and pollution, in their most degrading and disgusting forms. Henry Martin says, while witnessing the annual festival of one of their deities, "I trembled, as though I was standing within the very precincts of Hell !" Even during ages when reason and philosophy swayed their boasted and undisputed sceptre, men the most distinguished for their talents and intellectual endowments were babes in morals and giants in crime. In what a melancholy night, lengthening onward from age to age, are the poor heathen enshrouded ! The few points, thinly scattered over this deary waste where the light of life rests, appear like beacons kindled to admonish and guide almost a world in darkness. The heavens and the earth do indeed declare the glory of their Maker, but they speak a language too feeble and obscure to find its way to the heart of a benighted Pagan. He knows enough to be without excuse, but not enough to be either virtuous, holy, or happy. There is the bitterness of woe in Pagan lands. There dwell the children

of sorrow. There men sigh and weep, but breathe forth their sighs and shed their tears in vain. There are no beams of truth and mercy there to enlighten their darkness, or dry up the fountains of their grief. To all the light, and life, and warmth, and comfort of Christian hopes they are strangers. They grope for the path of life, but grope, alas, in vain !

Upon a still higher elevation, you survey those portions of our globe that are illumined by the gospel. On all these the Sun of righteousness has risen with healing in his beams. God is known as the chief good, and as accessible to the rebellious. His word is published ; his sabbaths are instituted ; his gospel is preached ; his church is established ; her ordinances are dispensed ; incense and a pure offering go up from ten thousand altars ; and men are *blessed with all spiritual blessings from heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. Untold moral influences here inweave and blend themselves with every department of human society, dictating its worship, prescribing its duties, protecting, extending, and perpetuating its joys. There are spots where the truth shines so intensely, that it has dried up the putrid waters, and while they have become exhaled, and purified, and ascended in the vapour of a grateful incense, and mingled themselves with

the light of heaven, they have left the once barren and noxious soil, verdant and fertile as an earthly Paradise. There are no temples here erected to the passions of men, no fanes dedicated to devils, no mysterious rites by which the votaries of false religions are seduced to iniquity and death. Of christian lands, it may be said, *The tabernacle of God is with men. The word is made flesh and dwells among them.* The image of Him who is invisible is perpetually before their eyes. And just in proportion as God is known, do we discover an elevation in their character, a melioration in their condition, a sensible advance in individual, domestic and public happiness.

It is worthy of remark that there are gradations of happiness in christian lands. There are those who cast off fear and restrain prayer ; who live without the Bible and without the Sabbath ; and though the prayers which are ascending every day around them, and the Bible and the Sabbath exert an indirect influence upon their character and condition, and purify and embalm the moral atmosphere, yet are they unhappy men. Wickedness and vice, though in modified and suppressed deformity, though embarrassed and restrained by the wholesome influence of the very christianity which they regret and despise, everywhere exert

a melancholy power. If you ask for the source of their wickedness and woe, it is ignorance of God, distance from this high and holy One, alienation from him who is the only satisfying portion, enmity to him who is the most lovely and most worthy to be loved. On the other hand, there are those who are encircled by the light of the divine mercy, cheered by the light of his countenance, happy in his smiles, joyful in his presence. There is no source of higher and purer satisfaction than this. Under all the circumstances of human life, whether prosperous, or adverse, men who have acquainted themselves with God may be at peace. They have learned to flee, not from him but to him—exploring the origin of their wants and their woes at his mercy seat—holding fellowship with him who supplies their necessities and relieves their sorrows ; and habitually enjoying the communications of that grace which drops as the rain and distills as the dew. And though they may suffer more evils and trials than the men of the world, yet have they sources of joy to which the men of the world are strangers.

In this survey there are two or three classes of distinct individuals. Here is one who though not at heart the friend of holiness, yet has no sympathy with men who have no fear of God

before their eyes, and therefore is he happier than they. He has no positive goodness. He is not, philosophically speaking, any *better* than the immoral, and profane. And yet he is not *so bad* as they. He does not live so far from God. And he is not so miserable. He is spared those pangs of a tortured conscience, those frowns of heaven's indignation, which so fearfully agitate and confound the more bold and incorrigible transgressor. He enjoys a sort of negative happiness—an absence of darkness—a reflected light, beaming obliquely around him.

And here is one still happier, unspeakably happier than the last. In addition to all his external regard for the divine authority, he is at heart the friend of his Maker. He is reconciled to him through the blood of his Son. He is a child of the Highest. He worships God in spirit and in truth. He has given himself away in an everlasting covenant never to be revoked, or forgotten. God is his refuge and portion. Come what will, he is safe, he is happy.

But there is another happier than he. He lives nearer to the Father of mercies. His intimacy with his Maker is more constant and uniform. There is less that is fitful in his piety; and more that is vivid, and ardent, and strong. He walks all the day in the light of the divine countenance.

His soul thirsts for God. He comes near even to his seat. With a prostrate heart and a steadfast eye, he looks toward the throne. He is at home at the place of prayer. The occupation of his life is to commune with him who dwells between the cherubim, and makes advances toward heaven. Earth does not perplex, idols do not ensnare him ; for he lives above the world and walks with God. Like Moses, he talks with his Maker, as it were face to face. Like John, he leans on Jesus' bosom. Like Paul, and Edwards, and Tennent, and Payson, he is sometimes caught up to the third heaven, and hears unspeakable words which it is not lawful for man to utter. Such a man stands upon the highest eminence of earthly joy.

Above the elevation and blessedness of this favoured child of mercy, there is one class of intelligencies more. I mean those immortal Princes who never fell from their first estate ; those bright inhabitants of that celestial world who never lost the divine image, and who with Gabriel stand in the presence of the most High. In the same society with these are the spirits of just men made perfect ;—once polluted and deformed, but now sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God, made like unto the angels, and with them possessing as their

inheritance the full and perfect enjoyment of him whose favour is life and whose loving kindness is better than life. Their happiness is as perfect as their holiness is unalloyed. Their minds are enkindled with one intense and eternal flame of divine love, burning with a clear, unceasing, perpetual ardency and splendor. And the happiest spirit there is the one that stands nearest the throne—the one who sees and enjoys most of God, and is the brightest partaker of his glory.

Is not the soul happy in the same proportion in which she comes near to God? Between that vile spirit that prowls around the outer court of the eternal prison, and the archangel that enters within the veil into the most Holy place, is there not an immeasurable disparity, all resulting from their distance, or nearness to him who is the source and fountain of all holiness and joy?

How wide the difference between the holy and the profane! The soul makes no real approximation to God until she sincerely loves him. There can be no genuine religion, where God is not the chief joy. Supreme love or enmity is the character of every moral being in the universe. There is no higher principle in heaven than supreme love to God. And there is no deeper, no viler principle in hell than alienation from him.

Who would be the enemy of God? Who would not love him? Who would live at distance from him, whose presence is the glory and the joy of heaven, whose absence is the darkness and woe of Hell? *There be many who say, Who will show me any good; Lord lift thou upon me the light of thy countenance. O that I knew where I might find him: that I might come near, even to his seat!*

No. VII.

THE USEFUL CHRISTIAN.

THE tendencies of piety are to do good. *A good tree bringeth forth good fruit.* The high aim of the true christian is to be useful. This is the tendency of his spirit, his affections, his desires, his hopes, his efforts, his whole renewed character. It is not that he may be a splendid man, nor even a happy man, but a *useful man*.

That man presses after a prize of very questionable lawfulness who aims at being a splendid christian, or even a happy christian ; but he has no misgivings of conscience when he aims at being a useful christian. He will be very apt to be disappointed if he aims at any thing short of this, while in modestly and humbly aiming at this, he will rarely miss his mark.

To be a useful christian a man must be *well instructed in the Oracles of God*. It is vain to think of being usefully occupied in the exercise of

christian affections, or the practice of christian duties, without a good understanding of christian truth. It is impossible otherwise to supply the motives to obedience, or inspire the mind with the principles of duty. Where religion would be enthroned in the heart and spread around her all her charms, she must act by the light of truth. And is it not indispensable to the christian character to be well established in the essential doctrines of the gospel? How can a man become conformed to the moral image of God, reconciled to his character, to his laws, to his designs, and to the salvation procured by his Son, if he is ignorant of these great and fundamental truths? How can his internal views and affections become essentially changed, if his understanding is shrouded in darkness? How can he have a spiritual discernment of spiritual things, if he has no intellectual discernment? On a memorable occasion when many of Christ's professed followers went back and walked no more with him, *Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.* What multitudes in different ages of the world have sacrificed their lives in testi-

mony of the truth and importance of the essential doctrines of the gospel. Indeed I know not in what saving faith consists, unless it be in believing and loving these great and precious truths. The christian's future and eternal hopes are founded upon God's immutable truth. *Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid.* And if a true christian may be distinguished from a merely nominal professor by his believing and maintaining the essential doctrines of the gospel, much more may the useful christian be thus distinguished. I have ever regarded a man's religious sentiments as a test of his usefulness. Nor have I ever been deceived in this impression. I see no way in which a very ignorant christian can be extensively useful. One reason why a multitude of christians accomplish so little in the cause of their divine Lord, is that they are so wavering and unsettled in their religious views, and withal so ignorant. With these impressions, I have wondered not a little at the growing prejudice against creeds and confessions of faith. By nothing has the baneful influence of error been so generally counteracted, and the cause of truth so generally promoted, as by these judicious confessions. New England owes her orthodoxy, under God, to the *Assembly's Catechism*; and not until that excel-

lent summary of doctrine fell into disuse, did her churches decline from the faith of their fathers. Old England too, owes its remaining orthodoxy to the *thirty-nine articles*. And, where will you find a formula which more clearly ascertains and defines the system of doctrines taught in the Holy Scriptures, than the *Catechism and Confessions of Faith of the Presbyterian Church*? Let it be a maxim with christians to have no views of truth but such as are definite. It were unspeakably better to understand a few truths well, and to know them certainly, than to expatiate vaguely over the extended fields of Christian science. The *certainty* of knowledge is a very different thing from the *extent* of knowledge. Because you may have but a *partial* and *imperfect* view of divine truth, it does not follow that you must of necessity be in darkness and uncertainty in relation to those truths with which you are familiar. Though no man that ever lived, should perfectly know all that God has revealed, this would not prove that he does not know many things with perfect *definiteness* and *certainty*. Though our natural eyesight is limited, so that we cannot see beyond a certain circle, nor all things at once in any circle, yet we can see one thing at a time, and that clearly. The same is true of the understanding.

Though we may have no knowledge about some truths, and though we cannot contemplate and compare many truths at once ; yet we can contemplate one thing at a time, and compare a few things together, and hence come to a definite and certain knowledge of such things as we can discern and compare, and from one truth clearly discover another, and so make slow, but progressive advancement in knowledge. And thus it is that we shall see clearly, the harmony, connexion, and consistency of the great truths which the Gospel reveals. It is this *definiteness* of view which we affectionately and urgently recommend to you. One doctrine of the Bible consistently understood, will almost necessarily lead a devout and inquiring mind to perceive and appreciate the harmony and connexion which run through all the peculiar and essential doctrines of the Gospel. The christian who thoroughly understands one doctrine of the Gospel, will be very apt to understand another and another. Once let his views of divine truth be definite, and there is little danger but they will remain distinct and prominent. Clear and definite views of God's truth, combined with ardent piety, go far to make a *useful christian*. The treasures which infinite wisdom has accumulated in the Bible

abundantly enrich, and adorn, and give practical utility to the Christian character. Aim at high attainments in Christian knowledge. If you cannot excel in every thing, excel in this. Labour, study, *pray*, to excel in this. To be burning and shining lights, you must feel the pre-eminent claims of religious truth. Every christian, in his place and proportion, is the instructor and guide of his fellow-men, to lead them to the day spring from on high, to illumine those who dwell in the darkness and shadow of death, and to show them the way of peace.

To be extensively useful, a christian must possess *ardent and uniform piety*. His usefulness will, in a great measure, depend upon the power which the religion of the Gospel exerts upon his own soul. To this, more than any other cause, may be traced the secret power of such men as Baxter, Edwards, Brainerd, Payson and Howard. One reason why so many christians live to so little purpose is, that while they may perhaps be good men, they are obviously deficient in that ardent piety which has a transforming effect upon the heart and deportment. God and heaven are not the point of attraction towards which their minds and efforts are perpetually tending. I have known christians of splendid talents not half so useful as

many of their humbler brethren ; and who probably will not be found in the more illumined departments of the heavenly city. A christian cannot be useful without fervent piety. His life must be hid with Christ in God. A living, active faith receives from the fulness of the Saviour all spiritual graces. Without this he declines and backslides ; he loses his sense of the divine presence, and his heart is left alone, weak, comfortless and wretched through manifold temptations. The channel of heavenly communication is obstructed—stopped—and the sanctifying, comforting influences of the Holy Spirit cease to flow into his soul. *Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered.* The christian, if he would be useful, must have habitual impressions of a present God. His mind must be familiar with things unseen. Their beauty and glory must shine upon him, not in a glimmering, flickering light, but in their steady splendour. He must have meat to eat which the world knows not of. He must have the image of God

impressed on his heart, and be in a good measure conscious of the high feelings and aspirations which belongs to his heavenly birth. He must put himself under the training of the celestial Spirit ; and his graces must grow and expand, and attain some such measure of stability as was developed in the experience of the great Apostle when he said, *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*. Such a religion is not the mere creature of the imagination ; nor is it the offspring of ignorance and enthusiasm ; nor is it the result of mere occasional excitements, and momentary feelings ; but of strong and stedfast principle. It has weight and influence. It does not vanish with the first causes of excitement and the first passion of zeal. The history of the human mind furnishes no stronger principle of action than such a religion ; nor is there any thing that can awaken the soul of man to greater efforts, or greater submission. It prefers a thousand times to die faithful, rather to live unfaithful ; to die with Christ, rather than live without him. The men of this world may not comprehend the principles and aims of such a religion ; they do not know them, and cast them out as evil. Men of such a spirit find their peace where the men of the world find their perplexity ; their joys where the children

of this world find their sorrows. Joyful in hope, and patient in tribulation, they weep as though they wept not ; they rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they use this world as not abusing it. Such a man may have his seasons of darkness, as well as his seasons of light ; his moments of languor, as well as his days of strength ; his periods of trembling, as well as triumph. The light of heaven may come in collision with the darkness of his own sinful heart ; the divine life may struggle with remaining death ; and holiness and sin, in rapid and imperceptible succession may maintain their conflict within him ; while amid all these alternations he does not forsake his Saviour. Piety is the christian's great adornment and gives his character its lustre. The bare hopes of piety, and even its predominating graces, ought not to satisfy him. Her self-denying spirit, her heaven-aspiring affections, her exalted and humbling joys, her unreserved self-devotement, her increasing purity, her sweet sensibility and tenderness, her absorbing confidence in the cross, and her deep and restless solicitude for the best interests of men ; these, under a wise direction, will not fail to make him a useful christian.

Another characteristic of a useful christian, is *untiring diligence and energy of action*. It was not by his talents merely, nor simply by his fervent

piety, nor was it only by his enlarged views of the truth of God, but by his indefatigable diligence and action combined with these, that the Apostle Paul accomplished a greater amount of good, than was ever accomplished by any other man. The life of a useful christian is an *eventful life*. It is fruitful in benevolent results. His energy is not developed so much upon set occasions, or by studied efforts : his whole life is full of labours and events that are intimately connected with the best interests of men. There are pious men, who are called to contend with most inactive and sluggish habits, both of body and mind ; and there are those who are never satisfied and happy unless they are in some way actively employed ; and the difference in the aggregate of good accomplished by these two classes of men, will be found, in the course of years, to be immense, and almost incalculable. Let every man settle it in his mind, that all his indolent habits must be broken up, if he has the most distant hope of becoming a useful christian. If he is not willing to harness himself for labour, he had better never enter the field. All the springs of his life will run down without effort. His hope and courage will sink and die away, if he has no spirit of enterprize. He will soon become a burthen to

himself, and a cumberer of the ground. A slothful christian is a contradiction, which it is very difficult to reconcile with the lowest standard of holiness. A man who is born for immortality—ruined by sin—redeemed by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ—promised a reward that outweighs all the material universe—and yet, murmur at hardship, and complain that he must labour for the cause of Christ! God expects better things of his people. The Church demands them. The age, the land which gave them birth, and nurtures them for scenes of toil and triumph such as the generations that are gone have never witnessed, expects better things of them, and things that accompany salvation to their own soul and to this dying world.

To be eminently useful christians must also be *men of prayer*. Nothing has so powerful a tendency to subdue the unhallowed affections of the mind, and the grosser appetites and passions of the body; nothing will so certainly control and direct the thoughts, and elevate them above all that is base and grovelling, trifling and little, as frequent and intimate fellowship with God. The great secret of mortifying a worldly spirit is to cultivate a heavenly one. “*Walk in the Spirit*, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” “Be

not conformed to this world, but *be ye transformed*, by the renewing of your minds." No where does the world appear so much like an empty shadow, and no where is its baleful influence so certainly counteracted, as in sweet communion with things unseen. Prayer furnishes the strongest stimulus, the most powerful incitement to self-denying duty and toil. And who has not observed that intelligent, earnest prayer improves all the powers and properties of the soul, and wakes the mind from her sluggishness and apathy to the exercise of the best and most ennobling affections? No where does that wonderful system of truth, that "mighty range of motive," disclosed in the Bible, obtain its sure and certain dominion over the soul, if not in the frequency, seriousness, and joy of familiarity with God. Were the history of christian's made known, I have no doubt that you might trace the distinguished usefulness of the most distinguished men to their closets. If you will review your own history, I think you will not fail to see that those periods of it have been most distinguished for usefulness, that have been most distinguished for prayer. The late Dr. Payson, in suggesting a few hints to a youthful brother in the ministry, among other most valuable remarks,

has the following: "The disciples, we read, *returned to Jesus, and told him all things; what they had done, and what they had taught.* I think that if we would every evening come to our Master's feet, and tell him where we have been; what we have done; and what where the motives by which we have been actuated; it would have a salutary effect upon our whole conduct. While reading over each day's page of life, with the consciousness that he was reading it with us, we should detect many errors and defects which would otherwise pass unnoticed." It is this familiarity with Jesus—they are these unaffected approaches to the throne of grace, through all the sins and duties, the mercies and trials of his course, that make the useful christian. I have seen christians of very reserved habits in their intercourse with men, who were eminently useful because they conversed with God. You will *greatly abound* in the duty of prayer, if you are ever eminently useful.

It is also indispensable to distinguished and permanent usefulness in a christian that he *mortify an aspiring spirit.* Do not contend for pre-eminence. If you are thrown among those who contend for it, retire from the conflict. Strive to do good, and if your motives are impeached, let

your habitual deportment be your only defence of them. I say again, beware of an aspiring spirit. There is scarcely any thing that has a stronger tendency to neutralize and counteract the benevolent designs of good men, than a self-complacent, aspiring spirit. *Beware* of it. Learn of him who was "meek and lowly in heart." He "that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

A christian to be eminently useful, must also be distinguished for no small share of *earnestness and zeal*. On this point I feel afraid of leaving a wrong impression. Zeal, without judgment and discrimination, spoils a man for a christian. A man may possess exemplary piety, and distinguished talent, but without practical wisdom he cannot become useful. And yet discretion may degenerate into timidity; may even lead to a trimming and calculating servility. A character that is formed on the highest models of usefulness, must be distinguished for decision, energy, and zeal, as well as self-diffidence and discretion. There is no danger that zeal will be too ardent, so long as it is the expression of *simple benevolence*. Only be sure that your heart glows with the benevolence of the Gospel, and the flame cannot

rise too high. True zeal will find its choicest aliment in cultivating the spirit of Jesus Christ. At a great remove from that false fervour and electric fire which has its origin in a selfish and ambitious mind, which hurries men on to act without consulting the sober dictates of their understanding, and which is distinguished for its subtilty, turbulence, and fickleness, it takes its rise from the meek and gentle spirit of holy love. It is warmed and fanned into flame by every breath of heavenly affection. It is simple, because it has nothing to disguise. It is strong and steady, because it is deliberate and cautious. It is unwearied, because, like the heaven-born charity from which it flows, "it seeketh not its own." And where shall we look for such a spirit, if not in christians? Where are there incentives to such a spirit, if not in the cross of Christ? Where did Paul find it, where did the primitive Christians find it, but in the love of Christ? What can support such a spirit, but those awful and touching realities, those weighty and tender truths which are exhibited with such irresistible energy and vividness, in that wonderful redemption which is the foundation of all your hopes? A light and cursory view of duty will not answer the purpose of your high calling. The mind must be roused

to the importance of it ; you must think intensely, and feel deeply ; every power of body and mind must be awakened and invigorated in the service of the divine Master.

There is another topic on which I will make a few observations : and that is, the importance of exercising a *kind and fraternal spirit*. Charity suffereth long and is *kind*. Charity is not easily provoked. Charity thinketh no evil. Charity beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. O, if this spirit of kindness—this mutual forbearance—this patience of injury—this freedom from suspicion and jealousy—this spirit of fraternal love and confidence were more prominent in the character of christians, how would they adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, and recommend religion to the world ! If I do not misinterpret, nor pervert the signs of the times, the day is near when there will be a peculiar demand for the cultivation of this spirit in the American churches. “ If a man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar ; for if he love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen ? ” How often have we seen the usefulness of christians lamentably circumscribed through the want of a kind and affectionate spirit ? There are those who need nothing but brotherly

kindness to make them patterns of every thing that is praiseworthy. I know that the constitutional temperament of good men is various ; but there is no apology for the man whose external light is on the wane, because the glow of kindness declines within. You live in such an evil world—a world where there are so many occurrences that are unavoidably painful—so many wrongs to be encountered and forgiven, and where there are such frequent requisitions for the exercise of a kind spirit, that if you do not take special pains to cultivate it, all the better feelings of your hearts will be suppressed, and the manly and generous spirit of a heaven-born religion will lose its glory in the envyings and suspicions of an earthly and selfish mind.

Would christians be useful, let them *beware of an earthly mind*. Let them cherish an habitual impression of the vanity and unsatisfying nature of all earthly things. Let them set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Nor is the providence of God in this respect at all at war with his word. God does not require christians to depreciate worldly good ; to exclude themselves from human society ; to immure themselves in cloisters, for the sake of mortifying an earthly, and nurturing a heavenly mind. It is altogether

a mistaken view of their duty that has induced some persons to retire altogether from the world, and to renounce all the intercourse and activity of social life. The author of our nature has with wonderful wisdom adjusted the claims of eternity and time to the relations which his people sustain to both worlds. He does not require them to disregard the claims of earth. He does not require any such divulsion of our nature as necessarily sets the parts of it in perpetual warfare. The design of the gospel is to elevate and sanctify the whole man ; to give the best and most benevolent direction to our entire existence ; to raise up from the ruins of the apostacy a new creature ; and to show its power, not in destroying man, but in regenerating him. Regenerated man is fitted for both worlds. A due regard to the engagements of time does not interfere with the most direct, and quiet course toward heaven. The christian never appears more in the true glory of his renewed nature than when he carries his religion into the world, and lets his light shine on all the departments of active and secular duty, and there amid the dust, and noise, and conflicts of earth, pursues his way toward the skies. It is a much more difficult thing to carry religion into the world, than to keep at a distance from the

conflict. Religion does not consist in living at distance from temptation, any more than in running needlessly into it ; but rather in encountering and overcoming temptation when it plainly meets us in the path of duty. By becoming christians, we do not cease to be men. The world has its temptations, and the world is every where. It is in the recesses of the wilderness. It is in the solitude of the ocean. It is in the retirement of the closet. It is deep in our own hearts. We shall find the world wherever we find our own unhallowed passions — passions which no solitude extinguishes, and which often gather strength from seclusion. No man can run away from the world without running away from himself. The presumptuous christian will find the world following him into his retirement ; while the subdued and chastened christian will find, amid all the complications and cares of business, a solitude in his own bosom, a little world of tranquillity within, a retreat more inaccessible than his closet, where, while his body is occupied in its ten thousand labours, his soul lives for God, and where amid all the confusions of earth, he possesses his mind in peace. There is such a thing as living in the world while in the deepest solitude ; and there is such a thing as being in solitude

in the midst of the world. What christians have to guard against is a *worldly spirit*. This will destroy their usefulness. If their treasure is on earth, their hearts will be there. If this world is their aim and object, they can accomplish little as christians. If they would be useful, their great end and aim must be things unseen. They must not forget their high calling. They must not forget why, nor for whom they were sent into the world, but every where so set their affections on things above, that they shall appear like pilgrims and strangers on the earth.

In concluding these remarks permit the writer in a word to say, that it becomes the people of God to aim to possess that uniformity of character which the gospel requires. It is worth much effort, watchfulness, and prayer, to guard against the more common faults and blemishes of christian character. It concerns good men to cultivate every grace and virtue, and to be adorned with all the beauties of holiness. The usefulness of a christian depends much on this *uniformity* of character. As "*dead flies* cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, so doth a *little folly* him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour." *Little things* have more to do in the formation of a spotless

moral character, than we are at once willing to believe. Especially beware of *little deviations* from sterling rectitude. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." It is impossible for the man who neglects little things then to command respect, or to be extensively useful. It is this *uniformity* of character which conciliates confidence and veneration, and which everywhere bespeaks a benevolent and elevated mind. Such a christian will not live in vain. He may have his superiors in some particular traits of excellence, but in that happy assemblage of excellencies that go to form the *useful* christian, he is one of the lights of the world. Not merely will he find the light of truth and holiness kindled within his own bosom; but he will become the source of light to others. He will be like a city that is set on a hill. Men will see him, and see him from afar. And when he is removed from this lower sphere, while it will be seen that one of the lights of this world is extinguished, it will be gratefully confessed that it is removed only to shine on a wider and brighter orbit.



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